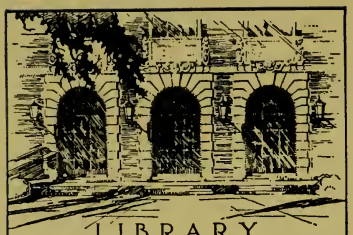

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A MODERN ULYSSES.

A MODERN ULYSSES.

BEING

THE LIFE, LOVES, ADVENTURES, AND STRANGE EXPERIENCES OF HORACE DURAND.

BY

JOSEPH HATTON,

AUTHOR OF "THREE RECRUITS," "TO DAY IN AMERICA," "CLYTIE," "THE QUEEN OF BOHEMIA," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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END.

A MODERN ULYSSES.

VOL. III.

BOOK I.

He wept: "The earth hath kindness,
The sea, the starry poles;
Earth, sea, and sky, and God above—
But, ah, not human souls!"

In summer in the woodlands,
The Baltic sea along,
Sits Neckan, with his harp of gold,
And sings this plaintive song.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

CHAPTER I.

THE DRAMATIC SEQUEL TO MY MEETING WITH GEORGE HARMER AND HIS WIFE AT ANTWERP.

"Come out," said Colonel Ernstone, the next morning, "or you will be a candidate for a lunatic asylum. Distraction is what you want—change of scene; come out, we will go for a stroll, nobody knows you as yet; stop thinking for an hour or two; that is the only remedy; come out, Horace."

I had not slept. The merchant's sudden departure, and his touching letter, had quite upset me. During breakfast six strangers had called to see me, and ten had left their cards. Ernstone had received the six for me. *The Telegraph* story, it seemed, had created a great sensation.

"If you don't come out you will be worried to death," said Colonel Ernstone.

He little thought of the new surprise to which he was about to introduce me.

"Nothing like walking when you are bothered," said Ernstone.

We walked to Oxford Circus.

"Not down the street," I said, for I was not willing to pass the end of Marylebone Lane at present.

"No, we will go up the street," he said.

"The hextraordinary shipwreck and hadventures with savages!" cried a newspaper vendor, thrusting a *Telegraph* at us.

"That's you!" said Ernstone, nudging me; "you will understand what Fame is by this time to-morrow!"

Oxford Street appeared to me very bright and dazzling, compared with its aspect on Christmas-day. The weather was cold, but the sun was shining. There were holly and mistletoe in shop-windows here and there. The traffic bewildered me; but the scene generally struck me as singularly cheerful.

Thinking of the somewhat gloomy appearance of the streets on Christmas-day, no doubt made me see more colour in them now than I otherwise should have done but for this contrast.

"I don't know anything after all that carries a fellow more out of himself than a court of law; that is, when he has no personal interest in the business; no fear as to the verdict of the jury, and all that sort of thing. Hi, hansom!"

"'Ere y'are, Sir!" responded a nimble driver.

"Old Bailey," said Ernstone.

"Yessir," said cabby, and away we went.

Having vainly endeavoured to run down two omnibuses, and made a vigorous attempt to annihilate a crossing-sweeper, "'Ere-y'are-sir," landed us safely, though not without some violence, at the Old Bailey.

As we entered the Criminal Court the business was proceeding in a leisurely, dull kind of way.

"Sit down here," said Ernstone, "we shall not be noticed. If the case is not amusing we will leave. But I am sure Miller will interest you. Besides, he will carry your mind back to Breedon, and, hush! come closer, by Jove he is reading in *The Telegraph* all about your return."

I had only a side-glimpse of the judge's face. Wearing his heavy official robes, he was reading a newspaper, and at the same time listening to the address of one of the counsel. Very few people were in court. The winter sun was falling upon the table, round which several barristers were sorting papers. I took a seat with my friend almost opposite what turned out to be the dock. The learned counsel for the prisoner was just closing what seemed to be a laboured appeal to the jury, more with the object of exciting their sympathies than to secure justice for his client. He referred particularly to a previous conviction, the importance of which he did not attempt to disguise; but at the same time he dwelt upon

the fact that the prisoner, during his penal servitude, had behaved well enough to obtain a ticket-of-leave, and that, in addition to this, his conduct, on being released, had been "spoken to" by most reliable and responsible witnesses. He begged the jury, in considering their verdict, to remember these facts, and to try and realise the possibility of the forged money which had been found in the prisoner's possession being none of his, and having been unwittingly received by him. It seemed to me, as I listened to the advocate, that the case against the prisoner was a foregone conclusion. This was evidently the belief of the Court, for no one paid any particular attention to the learned counsel's address, and when he sat down the judge proceeded to sum up with a calm, judicial intimation to the jury that they had but one duty to perform, and that was to pronounce the prisoner guilty. It appeared that he had been previously convicted as a coiner, and that within two months of his release he had been taken with a packet of forged money in his posses-

sion. The prisoner, on being arrested, stated that the money was placed in his hand by a woman, that he did not know the contents, nor had the slightest idea of them until the packet was opened before his eyes at the police station. There was no evidence to support this apparently lame statement; the case against the prisoner was only too conclusive; and the appeal of the learned advocate for the accused was rather one to be taken into consideration by the judge, in pronouncing sentence, than by the jury in considering their verdict.

Finding the business of the Court so uninteresting I was just about to give Ernstone a suggestive nudge for withdrawing, when a very earnest voice said, "My Lord, before the jury gives their verdict may I say a word?"

There was something so pathetic in the tone of the prisoner's voice, though the appeal in itself was ordinary enough, that the whole Court turned its eyes in the direction of the dock. I had previously only glanced at the prisoner, and had done so

under the generally lazy influence of the Court, without paying any particular attention to the appearance of the accused. Looking now into his pale, haggard face I seemed to recall features I had seen before under peculiar circumstances. It was a careworn, thoughtful face, a mouth more generous than sensual, and eyes that certainly did not speak the criminal. It was the face of a man who had suffered much, but crime had not left its indelible and unmistakable marks upon it. I do not mean to imply that it was a frank, honest face, but there was more in it of sorrow and sadness and mental pain than of cupidity and vice. I had seen it before. I never forget a face. I tried hard to remember the circumstances under which I had met the prisoner.

"I have seen that man before," I whispered to Ernstone.

"Have you? Where?"

"I cannot remember; but I know him."

"Your counsel has spoken for you," said Mr. Justice Miller, in his hard judicial voice

(how it carried me back to Baveno!), "but I will hear you."

"I wish," said the prisoner, "to ask the policeman a question."

"Great heavens!" I exclaimed, "it is George Harmer!"

"Silence in the Court!" cried the usher.

I had half risen. Ernstone pulled me back upon my seat.

The judge intimated that the prisoner's application was out of order. The counsel for the prosecution, however, rose in reply to inform the Court that he had no objection to offer against it. Counsel for the prisoner shrugged his shoulders, and intimated that he was in the hands of the Court.

"I hadn't thought to say a word, your lordship," said the prisoner, in a tremulous voice, but with a certain confidence and clearness of elocution that seemed to promise something worth hearing, "but I feel that I owe something to the kind friends who have spoken for me, and that the previous conviction which has been mentioned may, if I

remain silent, send me back to transportation for life."

(It was George Harmer. I watched him with an eager eye. I listened to every word that was said with breathless attention.)

"If your counsel sees fit," said the judge, "you will have an opportunity of addressing the Court later."

"I only wish to ask the policeman a question."

"Policeman, stand forward," said the judge.

An intelligent looking officer stepped into the witness-box.

"You may put your question through me," said the judge.

"Will your lordship ask who gave him the information upon which I was arrested?"

Counsel for the prosecution rose to object. Scotland Yard, he said, had necessarily its secret sources of information, and apart from that the question was one which could hardly be considered relevant as touching the evidence before the Court. Counsel for

the defendant ventured to differ, and the Court ruled in favour of the prisoner.

"Will your lordship ask him if it was a woman?" said the prisoner.

"Was it a woman who gave you the information upon which you arrested the prisoner?" asked the judge,

"It was, your lordship," said the policeman.

"Will you ask him," said the prisoner, "if she is in Court?"

Counsel for the prosecution again objected, and an interesting wrangle on both sides was finally concluded in favour of the question being put.

"She is in Court, your lordship," said the policeman.

There sat within a short distance from the witness-box a woman, whose features were partly veiled by what ladies, I believe, describe as a "complexion fall." As the prisoner spoke she raised her head, with a defiant glance towards the dock, and then at the counsel for the prosecution. It was then

that I noticed an expression which, like a flash of thought, brought back to me the two young people, Mr. and Mrs. Harmer, whom I had met on their honeymoon at Antwerp. There was noticeable in the woman the same calm, statuesque beauty, the straight classic nose, the low forehead, the bluish-grey eyes, the strongly-marked chin, which had previously impressed me. Here, then, at the Old Bailey was the sequel to the Antwerp holiday, the consummation of my own forecast of trouble.

"Is that the woman who informed against me?" asked the prisoner, pointing to the seat she occupied, all the time turning his head in a different direction.

"It is," said the officer.

"My lord and gentlemen," said the prisoner, "*that woman is my wife!*"

There was something so dramatic in the declaration that it sent a thrill of surprise through the court, and you may be sure that I was deeply moved.

The judge raised his double eye-glasses

to look at the woman and her husband, as the latter proceeded, without further remark, to make a statement to the jury.

"My lord and gentlemen, I will, in a few words, put my case before you. If, when you have heard it, you think I am worthy to be sent back to Millbank for the rest of my miserable days, I shall not complain. Six years ago I had a studio in Newman Street. I was a decorative artist. It was necessary for the purpose of my work that I should have a model from which to design a figure of Victory for a panel at Norfolk House. One day my patron sent me a beautiful young woman for this purpose. I fell in love with her, and six months afterwards I married her. I had saved two hundred pounds, and was making generally an income of three to four hundred a year. I took her for our honeymoon on a tour through France, Holland, and Belgium. I had studied as a boy in Holland, and had made many pilgrimages to Antwerp. I was anxious to show her the scenes which had

inspired what little ability I possessed. We returned to London. My wife developed very extravagant tastes. She ran me into debt and ruined me. All this time my one object was to please her. It did not matter to me what she asked or what she desired, so long as I could administer to her happiness. We drifted into bad society. She introduced me to strange people of strange habits. One night we visited together a coiner. He was a Dutchman. I joined his confederacy. My artistic qualifications made me a valuable acquisition to the band. I became a manufacturer of spurious money, my wife one of three women who passed most of the spurious coinage, in London, Paris, Vienna, and Berlin. Eventually we were taken. I was advised by my counsel that if I made certain declarations my wife would escape the punishment of her crime. She pleaded that she acted under my control and authority; I strengthened her plea by fully endorsing it. She wept plentifully; I think I did so too, as she stood by me in

the dock. She was acquitted; I was sentenced to five years' penal servitude. Two months ago I was released on a ticket-of-leave, and a few pounds were given me by the officer of a charitable society. I sought out my wife, and found her living with another man. She did not confess this to me, I discovered it for myself. I took a lodging, begged her to come home to me, and to rest assured that I would retrieve the past by an honest course of life. I had, while in prison, been allowed to do something in the way of my art. She said it was impossible for her to come to me at once, but she would in a fortnight. I obtained employment with the firm, the members of which have given me the character you have heard. I found my wife's address, and sent her, each week, money that she might not be dependent upon any one else. The fortnight passed; she did not return. I saw her occasionally, still influenced by my former infatuation and love for her, and now by a new desire to lead

her into a better life. Six weeks went by in this manner, when one morning I received a letter from her appointing to meet me that night by the Gower Street Station of the Underground Railway. I had passionately urged her to come back to me and had intimated that it was unwise for her to tempt me to take vengeance upon the man who kept her from me. She begged me to meet her at nine o'clock, and promised she would go home with me. I was there punctually. She came to me, and, placing in my hands a small parcel, she said, 'There, George, is all the money you have sent me; I have saved every penny of it: hold it for a minute. Dutchy, as you call him, is round the corner; he is quite reconciled to my going; I promised that if you were here to keep your appointment I would go back for a minute and say good-bye for ever.' I pressed her hand; said 'God bless you! and I forgive him!' She hurried away and I waited. Five minutes had not elapsed when the policeman came up to me,

and said, 'Your name is George Harmer.' I said 'Yes, it is.' 'You have a ticket-of-leave,' he said. I said, 'Yes, that is true.' 'Then I arrest you for being in the possession of counterfeit coin.' I told him he had made a mistake. I did not, however, object to accompany him to the station-house, but I was waiting for my wife, and begged him not to take me away for a few minutes longer. He said that was a pretty tale to tell; I must come along and explain it to the inspector. I went with him, the packet in my hand just as it was when she gave it me. They opened it at the station-house, and found it to be a packet of spurious gold and silver; and that, your lordship and gentlemen of the jury, is the simple truth from first to last."

Nobody doubted it for a moment.

"*Not Guilty!*" was the prompt and decisive verdict of the jury.

"A pitiful story, truly," said the judge, looking at the prisoner; "true or false, it has obtained your acquittal. You are discharged."

"It is true, my lord."

"*I believe it is*," said the judge.

"I know it is!" I said, rising, and pushing my way towards the prisoner.

"Silence!" cried the usher.

"Who is this person?" asked the judge, "let him stand forward!"

"It is Mr. Horace Durand!" said Colonel Ernstone, rising in his seat.

"Indeed! an unexpected pleasure," said Mr. Justice Miller, looking at me through his eye-glasses.

"Usher, show Mr. Durand to a seat on the bench. And request the discharged prisoner to come to my room.

"Yes, your lordship."

Harmer disappeared beneath the dock.

"And Colonel Ernstone, I would like to speak with you."

Only a few minutes had elapsed before I was shaking hands with Mr. Justice Miller. The Bar was greatly excited. While Ernstone was explaining to the counsel that I was the Durand whose adventures were

referred to in the morning paper, and that my uncle was the judge's intimate friend, Mr. Justice Miller was congratulating me on my safety and welcoming me back to England.

"Not quite the hard-hearted judge you would have thought, eh?" he said, with a somewhat cold smile.

"You have tempered justice with mercy, in the only case I have heard you try, sir," I answered.

"But you do not love me in your heart. No matter, tell me how I can serve you."

"Is it possible you did not know who this man was whom your patience, let me say your kindness, has saved from the vilest of vile conspiracies?" I asked.

"Not my patience, nor my kindness, Mr. Durand," said the judge, "but duty. You know this man. I believe I have seen him before; I occasionally see a criminal twice; but that never changes my neutral feeling towards him; I am the servant of the Law."

"This poor wretch," I said, "shot with you on a first of September at Dunstan's."

"Is it possible?" said the judge.

"He was the decorative artist whom the Squire, in his hospitable way, invited to join our party in the Breedon Valley," I said.

"Dunstan gave his social instincts a wide range," said the judge, looking up towards the Bar for the first time.

"May it please your lordship," said an elderly barrister, "in the case of ——"

"Mr. Durand, good day!" said the judge, "I hope we shall meet again soon; my secretary will show you to my room; you will find this person, Alexander D. Russell, *alias* George Harmer, there; if I can assist any philanthropic designs which you and Colonel Ernstone may entertain in his interest you may command my services."

"Thank you very much, my lord," I said.

Colonel Ernstone had indeed succeeded in turning my thoughts into new channels. Trying to recognise the hand of Providence

in this last incident, I am bewildered with the complications that belong to it.

When I went into the judge's room, George Harmer was standing in the middle of it, pale and agitated.

"My poor friend!" I said, taking his hand, which he tried to withdraw from me, "you have indeed suffered."

He gripped my hand, his lips quivered, and great tears rolled down his pale, worn cheeks.

CHAPTER II.

I BECOME FAMOUS.

Antiquity has a maxim which describes Fame as resembling the shadow that retires when pursued, but follows when shunned. A certain philosopher, who has written very pleasantly upon aphoristic and other subjects, contests the truth of the maxim in question. "A pretty metaphor," he says, "will often give currency to a falsehood." He thinks that, "if a man chooses to let fame alone, fame will be very content to let him alone." I am not anxious to take up the cudgels in favour of proverbs and the like, but I present myself as a living example of the wisdom of the ancient writer who likened fame to the shadow that follows when shunned.

At the same time I might point to my career as an instance of the amiable philosophy that "everything happens for the best." Who would have thought that the calamity of my being disowned by my uncle Grantley would be my first step to fame and fortune? The preacher previously quoted declares, that, if the votaries of celebrity knew how seldom the most conspicuous names form the subject of thought or discourse, they would not be so eager to chase "the phantom Fame." Seeing that I never dreamed of being celebrated, I have not been afflicted with the passion for notoriety against which many writers have so much to advance; but, in spite of the inconvenience, not to say annoyance, which the fame of my exploits inflicted upon me during the first few weeks of my experiences of becoming celebrated, I am free to confess there is a certain amount of pleasurable emotion in standing apart from the crowd, and in feeling that after death one will not be altogether forgotten.

As if it were not a sufficient claim to "lionisation" that I was the hero of an appalling shipwreck and the discoverer of a new group of remarkable islands, the Old Bailey incident was a newspaper and society topic the next day. I awoke, indeed, to find myself famous. My name was in every newspaper and on every lip. The "manliness" of my conduct in Court was in keeping with the modesty which I had exhibited in regard to my singular adventures and remarkable discoveries. The incident of the Old Bailey occupied a prominent space in the London daily papers; and I was invited by a dramatist to join him in weaving it into a story for representation on the stage.

Indeed, I should like the reader to try and guess something that I was not invited to do at this period of my career. It seemed to me as if London for forty-eight hours simply concentrated itself upon me and my affairs.

Invitations poured in upon me from all quarters, invitations to dine, to dance, to

breakfast, to lunch, to subscribe to hospitals, to attend meetings of the Aborigines' Aid Society; invitations to consider suggestions for the conversion of the Bulonagan and Kututu islands into Joint Stock Companies; to form associations for pearl-fishing, diamond-mining, collecting gutta, and tropical farming; invitations to write for this paper and that magazine, to give this publisher the honour of publishing the book which of course I should write, fully describing my adventures; invitations to sit to fourteen different photographers, three of whom in the most delicate way offered me a royalty on the sale of every copy sold; invitations it seemed to me from everybody, to do everything, except an invitation from my uncle Grantley, towards whom my heart was yearning for friendship and forgiving recognition, and in the absence of which even a command to the royal presence at Windsor was not sufficient compensation.

If in my wildest moments I had dreamed that all this notoriety awaited me in London

I should not have had the courage to face it. Bewilderment but feebly describes my general condition. An outcast, who five years previously had gladly embraced an offer of little less than labourer's work on the quay at Gloucester, to be received in the royal presence chamber of the greatest and most gracious Queen known to history, was something too overwhelming for realisation. Nothing could have been more considerate or amiable than the royal interest in the story of my adventures, more particularly in that part of the narrative which dealt with my intercourse with the King of Kututu. It would not become me to enter into particulars of my visit to Windsor, the recollection of which will however always remain with me as one of the most cherished remembrances of my life.

For a whole week I was kept in a continual whirl of excitement. The Geographical Society invited me to address a meeting on the new islands. I did so, and relieved myself of one half of Mr. Jeffrey

Waller's draft I concluded my sketch of the Bulonagans by offering a subscription of 5,000*l.* towards the costs of an expedition to these islands, and for the relief of the King of Kututu. The next morning the press, in referring to my remarks, commended my generosity, and I fear that this somewhat ill-advised disclosure of my wealth must have excited the envy or jealousy of rival lions and struggling merit; for there appeared in one or two journals articles openly questioning my veracity and sneering at my ostentation. My association with a convicted coiner was remarked upon with playful vindictiveness. *The Superfine* (bless its honest-spoken scepticism!) challenged my geographical knowledge, and almost in the language of a modern classic declared it did not believe there was any such person as the King of Kututu. Indeed, the unsympathetic and daring reviewer had the audacity to suggest that the entire business had been got up in Peterborough Court to extend still further "the largest circulation."

Orders rolled in for *The Mayfair Magazine* nevertheless. The editor rubbed his hands with delight at the sensation which he had initiated, when he handed me pen, ink, and paper in the little room adjoining the editorial chambers. I was greatly impressed with the profitable nature of writing for the press when a cheque for a hundred guineas was posted to me "for the Shipwreck article —with thanks." All of a sudden I understood the meaning of "the wages of an ambassador and the treatment of a gentleman;" and I offer this experience of mine as ample endorsement of Mr. James Payn's *Nineteenth Century* praises of the profession of writing. It is true that *The Mayfair Magazine* only sent me two guineas for that early sketch which the editor had remembered so long in connection with my name. But the circumstances attending the two contributions were of course entirely different, and I can quite understand why London journalists now-a-days ride in the Park, and hob-nob with princes. One

hundred guineas for a contribution a little over a column in length! At that rate I could have afforded to give all my ten thousand pounds away. I don't know that I argued the business out in this manner, but I might have done so, and acting upon such conclusions should of course have come to grief. I had, however, no time to theorise nor to speculate, events carried me from one excitement to another with such great rapidity.

At first I was inclined to be very angry with my hostile critics. For an entire half-hour I had serious thoughts of going to the office of *The Superfine* and thrashing somebody.

But Colonel Ernstone said "that would never do." "The proper course," he argued, "would be to go and make friends with them."

I laughed satirically at the suggestion.

"You are wrong, my friend," he went on, "never quarrel with a newspaper—they always have the last word. I give you the

same advice that Baron Alderson or Martin, I forget which, gave to my old friend the Bishop of Durham. It was that bishop who was so awfully rich, and whom *The Times* attacked. The churchman asked the judge's advice. When the assizes were on in the North, the two old boys dined together at the deanery. 'I think I shall write to the *Times* and explain where the writer is wrong!' 'Don't do anything of the kind,' said the judge, 'take my advice; you have no chance in a fight with an editor. If *The Times* charged me with murdering my grandmother, I should certainly offer no defence. Supposing I did, and they apologised or explained, they would probably say that, 'it is true, it seems, that the learned judge did not murder his grandmother, but it is well known that he is an adulterer, which, in the eye of the Church, is a crime of almost equal importance;' no, my dear Bishop, don't write to *The Times*, they will have the last word, whatever you may say!' And I repeat that counsel to you, Horace." I accepted it.

The very next night Ernstone introduced me to the editor of *The Superfine* himself, a pleasant unassuming old gentleman, who did not hesitate to denounce the writer who had contributed the objectionable article in question to his pages. He quite disagreed with it, and he should, most assuredly, acquaint the author with his opinion upon the subject. I sometimes wonder if he "laughed in his sleeve," as he said so. He certainly had no opportunity of laughing anywhere else, for I watched him narrowly. Later I met the author himself. Did I shoot him? No. He turned out to be one of the most inoffensive of men; and moreover he most emphatically denied all knowledge of the article in question. I was telling this to the editor of a popular weekly paper the other day, who said he was quite right to deny the authorship of the article if it suited his convenience. "I frequently," he said, "write to angry correspondents, and declare that the objectionable paragraph to which you allude

'quite escaped my notice,' when I had really written it myself—it saves such a lot of trouble and bother." My friend in this case is a wag. He might have been telling me the truth or not. One of his leading views of journalism I know is, that it is the first duty of an editor to make his paper entertaining. Similarly I can testify to the fact that he holds it to be of primary social importance that a host should amuse as well as feed his guests. My critic in *The Superfine* turned out, as I have already explained, to be one of the mildest mannered and pleasantest of men. In regard to the special work which he was employed to do he frankly admitted that he was not a newspaper fellow, don't you know, but was studying for the bar, my dear friend, and hated sensationalism of all kinds, and especially when it was associated with exploration or geography, or travel, don't you know; but at the same time he confessed he liked me and he would make it all right, dear friend, in an article for another paper.

Could not of course ask *The Superfine* to withdraw what it had said, but I might rely on him to put the case for the other side in glowing colours in *The Censor*. He was utterly indifferent to the responsibilities or duties of journalism, being as it seemed a mere contributor to the press and not a member of the so-called journalistic profession. I was very sorry that I had mentioned the matter at all to this gentleman, he was really so apologetic in his remarks and so full of assurance of his kindly feelings towards me. I believe it is characteristic of critics and reviewers that writers who are most aggressive on paper are often the mildest and most genial creatures away from their desks. A similar peculiarity obtains among commercial men. I have heard persons from London who used to visit Squire Dunstan in the old days say, that, while he was a prince of good fellows and the most generous of hosts outside business, he was a perfect fiend in a monetary transaction. "Will have his pound of flesh?"

a certain City man said in the hearing of Dunstan himself; "that's not it at all; wouldn't mind if he would be content with that, but he will have a pound and a half." Yet what a kindly, generous, considerate, liberal fellow he was outside what these people call business!

Ah how well I remember the dear old squire, his choice Madeira, his travels on wheels about the Manor House, his pleasant dinner parties, his remarkable guests from town, his splendid horses, and his handsome unsophisticated yet accomplished and clever daughter! He was a model squire, and she was a delightful lady of the manor. It was difficult to realise the solemn fact that he was dead, that Warrington Manor had passed into other hands, that Helen Dunstan was now what might be called a woman of the world, since in the interest of true charity she had done battle against some of the harpies who make it a stalking-horse for their own selfish aggrandisement. Ernstone told me that she had only sold the manor on

a lease of years, that she still retained the freehold, and he believed she had parted from it for a time because the pleasant memories that once belonged to it had become sour and harsh and disagreeable. He suggested that the day might come when Miss Dunstan, like my friend the merchant, would feel that longing of old age which stretches out imaginary arms to the scenes of its childhood. As if Helen Dunstan could ever be old! The idea seemed to me to be perfectly preposterous.

I think as we grow older our memory for the earliest incidents and scenes of our youthful days strengthens. The happiest periods of our life remain with us, oases in the desert; and the bitterest things that have occurred also remain, as if to heighten by contrast the effect of the events that are sweet. To-day I seem to hate the spot where Welby threatened and persecuted me, though my heart goes out in tenderness and love to my father's tomb close by; while the stale "tobaccoy" smell of the "Angel," where

my uncle bade me seek him if ever I should be in trouble, is as delicious to me, in its way, as the perfume of gardenia that reminds me of my dream in the gardens of the Villa Verona.

It was little time that I had for these and other reflections during my busy week in London, busy with emotions and incidents, busy with fame and fortune. By the end of the week I was so "played out," to use a graphic Americanism, that I was not sorry to receive a telegram from Father Gabriello requesting me to go to Antwerp immediately, and naming my favourite hotel as the place of rendezvous. Ernstone had only just gone down into the country to arrange for my visiting the Hallams, and to get my uncle there, he said, when this message reached me. I telegraphed to his Yorkshire address, and the next evening at Antwerp received his reply, "Oddly enough," it ran, "your mother and Miss Dunstan are at Brussels; I have wired them to await me there—be prepared to see us at Antwerp—let me beg

of you not to leave, at all events until you see me there."

It will be readily understood that my feelings continued to be in a state of great disturbance at the prospect of renewing my acquaintance with Father Gabriello, seeing Constance Gardner and Helen Dunstan again, and meeting my mother once more. If London was a city of emotions for me, Antwerp promised it a strange and exciting rivalry. It seemed as if I was hurried from one sensation to another. Since I had landed at the London Docks I had gone through a round of adventures, and Ernstone predicted that one of the most surprising experiences of all was in store for me in the interview I had yet to have with the agents of Mr. Jeffrey Waller. The head of a distinguished firm of solicitors had left his card at Long's Hotel, with a request that I would fix a time when I would call upon him, or when he should repeat his visit to me. While therefore my trunks were being packed for the night mail to Brussels, I telegraphed to

Messrs. Blandford and Blandford, of Essex Street, Strand, informing them that they might expect to see me almost as soon as they would get my message.

In all my experiences of savage life, at all events dating from my left-handed escape from the ovens of Bulonagan, I do not think I have ever felt a more nervous fear of disaster than I endured in the first few days of my navigating the London streets, immediately after my arrival from the East by the P. and O. steamer. It seemed to me as if every hansom was engaged in running the gauntlet of all the other vehicular traffic, with a view to taking all the possible risks of coming to grief. On one day I tried a private brougham, but the competing carriages, cabs, and waggons seemed to be engaged in a conspiracy to run me down. Possibly my sailor-life, passed so much on broad ocean paths, and my long habit of comparative seclusion among those sunny islands of the sea, basking under an equatorial sun, had unfitted me for the hurry and

bustle, the feverish stir, and perpetual motion of the London streets.

Mr. Blandford, the senior partner of the firm of Blandford and Blandford, smiled at me in a curiously interested way, when I told him what my impressions of the London streets were; and I was prompted to the confession simply because the hansom in which I was driven tried to enter Essex-street through the shop-window at the Strand corner of it, and was only prevented from doing so by the considerate intervention of a policeman who happened to be passing at the moment. I am told that the London cabmen are the best drivers in the world. If recklessness is the chief factor in good driving, then I think they are. Ernstone says the cabbies have greatly degenerated since he was a young fellow in town, and I should not wonder if the statistics of accidents in the streets do not prove his assertion.

Mr. Blandford said he did not ride in cabs much; and he advised me to invest in

a good useful brougham, a pair of sturdy cobs quiet to ride or drive, and an experienced and sober coachman.

"For," said he, "except from choice, there is not the smallest necessity that you should distress yourself with the apparent vexation you feel in regard to the use of public cabs."

"Indeed!" I said, "I suppose my offer of 5,000*l.* towards an expedition to Kututu has led you, like the rest, into the belief that I am a very wealthy man, though as Mr. Jeffrey Waller's solicitor I should have expected that you might have known better."

"And I hope after this interview, Mr. Durand, we may say as your solicitors also. Blandford and Blandford, I need hardly remark, do not go a begging for clients; quite the contrary; we are continually declining them; but in your case we shall feel a great personal interest in attending to your business."

"But, my dear sir, I have no business that requires attention," I said, "and, while

thanking you very much for your compliments, I can hardly think you have desired me to call for the purpose of making proposals for the management of my affairs, when in truth I have no affairs."

"You are a man of business, I see," said Mr. Blandford; "I feared you were not, from what Mr. Waller said about you, and judging from your irritation at the traffic of the London streets. Mr. Durand, I am glad to make your acquaintance, and I hope we may be good friends. Mr. Jeffrey Waller has charged me with the duty of informing you that he has made you his heir."

"His heir!" I exclaimed.

"His heir," said Mr. Blandford, "and there is only one condition attached to his munificence. Mr. Jeffrey Waller is the descendant of an old family of London merchants, known throughout many generations for their probity and honour. Electing to enjoy the freedom of bachelorhood, Mr. Waller has no children, nor is he likely to marry. At his demise he makes your title

to succeed to his wealth depend only upon your consent to add his family and his Christian name to your own. It would stand thus—Horace Durand Jeffrey Waller; and it seems to me, I take the liberty of saying, an improvement. In the meantime he places to your credit, through me, the sum of twenty thousand pounds, which is at your service, to be returned at your convenience in case you do not accept his proposal, which, in case you do, is to be considered as forming part of his estate. You hesitate?"

"I am slightly bewildered," I said, "and on the spur of the moment do not know what to say except that I thank you, sir, for the information you have given me, and that I am grateful to Mr. Jeffrey Waller for the interest he has taken in my welfare."

"But you decline his generous dispositions in your favour, eh?" said Mr. Blandford rising from his seat and standing in front of his fire, with his back to the ruddy blaze. "You say 'No,' as Waller suggested you might? Are you so full of false

pride as our dear old friend thinks, or are you the man of business I believe you to be?"

Mr. Blandford was a grey-headed gentleman, with a clean-shaven face, and a pair of dark piercing eyes. He was dressed a little after the fashion of my uncle, and looked more like a country gentleman than a London solicitor. He eyed me curiously, but not without something of a friendly expression of countenance.

"Mr. Blandford," I said, "I have undergone so many surprises of late that you must forgive me if I ask you to repeat to me the proposal which you seem to think I ought to refuse."

"No, sir, not ought; my view would be that you ought to say 'Yes' to it at once; to hesitate is, I should say, to trifle with good fortune, if not to fly straight into the face of Providence; but Mr. Jeffrey Waller had an idea that you might refuse, and in that case he has instructed us as to an alternative will. The proposal, or rather let me say the invitation, is this ——"

He repeated the heads of his previous communication, and while he did so I tried to master the situation.

"And," said Mr. Blandford in conclusion, "I do not know any family which might not consider it an honour to quarter upon its escutcheon the arms of the Wallers, and no name that could be lowered by association with that of our esteemed and honoured client."

"I don't know that I have an escutcheon to quarter anybody's arms upon for that matter," I said; "but I have a name that is honourable if not distinguished."

"And on that matter," said Mr. Blandford, "I really do not know that Mr. Waller rejoices in the luxury of a coat of arms; my reference to armorial bearings was a figure of speech, my tribute to the honour and probity of the Wallers is a matter of fact."

"Mr. Waller has been most kind to me," I said, "and I was deeply moved to see him so distressed when he could find no trace of his old home in Oxford Street. His sudden

departure filled me with regret and his letter with wonder. This that you have now told me, as I said before, surprises and bewilders me. Is it necessary that I should give you an immediate answer?"

"No, not at all; to-morrow will do, or next week, or next month, or next year. Mr. Waller has made his will, but he would like to be informed of your views speedily, and we are instructed to telegraph to him at Singapore the result of this interview."

"Then tell him, Mr. Blandford, that I am deeply sensible of his kindness; that I am now on my way to the continent; but I hope to return in a few days, when I will give you my answer."

"Which will be sufficiently prompt, seeing that he cannot arrive at Singapore under a month," said Mr. Blandford, "and in the meantime you understand that you may draw upon me for any sum you please up to twenty thousand pounds."

"Thank you very much," I said. "I do not require money, and that I am com-

paratively rich is partly through Mr. Waller; though I have brought some little property from the East in the way of pearls and other things that are easy of realisation."

"As you please, Mr. Durand; and let me say in conclusion, that, if you would like to consult any other lawyer in the matter or place me in communication with any other firm of solicitors, we hold ourselves entirely at your command."

"You are very good; whether I say 'Yes' or 'No,' Mr. Blandford, it will not be necessary to say it through any third person."

"Good-day, Mr. Durand; pardon me for saying you are a very lucky fellow."

"I have heard so before, Mr. Blandford," I replied, "and sometimes I think I am."

I travelled all that night on my way to Antwerp *viâ* Brussels. It was bitterly cold. I felt the harshness of the weather keenly in spite of my furs and wraps. The tub of a boat in which I crossed the channel reminded me of *The Phoebe*. I do not say this disparagingly of that excellent but ill-fated

craft. There was nothing in common between the two vessels; one sailed, the other steamed, yet I was reminded of *The Phoebe* as we ploughed through the waters plunging and rolling; and it seemed to me that I ought to have placed myself in communication with the owners. When I came to reflect upon the matter, it appeared odd that they had not written to me, seeing how much noise my article in *The Telegraph* had made, and that the entire press of the country was discussing my proposal for an expedition to Kututu and the Bulonagans. As I looked out into the dark night, I recounted to myself some of the perils I had gone through as a mariner, and I began to wonder whether the carpenter of *The Phoebe* still lived. I talked to one of the men on board the channel boat, but the sailor-men of that craft were of an entirely different mould to the mariners who had been my shipmates on board *The Phoebe*. I made a note in my mind to write to the owners of *The Phoebe* from Antwerp, making inquries after the

carpenter, and tendering my evidence to them in regard to the loss of the vessel. Moreover I had hardly had time to think of George Harmer, whose misfortunes recurred to me now with double force as I travelled onwards towards the two cities where I had encountered him, at the height of his happiness, and seen also the gathering of that terrible storm which was eventually to overwhelm him.

CHAPTER III.

WITH FATHER GABRIELLO.

I found Father Gabriello at the hotel when I arrived at Antwerp. He had not changed in appearance nor in manners. He was the same genial cleric as of yore. A man of medium height, he was thick set, broad of shoulder, and of a robust habit. He was addicted to no mortification of the flesh. Great fasting formed no part of his religious exercises. Yet he was, I should say, a priest of the strictest morality, and he certainly had a kind heart. A round-faced, florid complexioned, grey-headed man, he had genial eyes, and there was firmness as well as generosity in the form and expression of his

mouth. I feel quite sure that in saying he was heartily glad to see me again he delivered himself of no mere formula of courtesy.

"You look tanned and weather-beaten," he said, "and I suspect your mind has been as well disciplined as your body since last we met."

"I have seen the world, father," I answered.

"When we parted last you were a smoothed-faced enthusiastic youth; to-day you are a man with a beard on your face, and in your experience, I make no doubt; let me congratulate you upon your prosperous and safe return."

He shook my hand warmly.

"You have read the English papers, then?"

"Yes, and the French."

"Has my return, then, interested France?"

"All the world, I think," said the priest, "for your name is in every newspaper I have seen during the past week, French, German, or English."

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"And yet my uncle has made no sign," I said. "You know him well, do you think he will?"

"Not until you run up your signals of friendship," he said.

"If I thought the response would be what I could desire, I would signal him immediately," I said.

"There is time enough," answered the priest. "You have not seen him lately?"

"Not for years, and he has probably forgotten all about me; but I have heard of him."

I did not learn until a later day that Father Gabriello is a distinguished member of the Society of Jesus with considerable liberty of action, and that he is personally known in all the great cities of Europe.

"And Colonel Ernstone, I hope he is well?" he said presently; "no young man had ever a more devoted or attached friend than you have in that distinguished military officer."

"He is well, I thank you, and I am

fully sensible of his great kindness to me. I seem to have the faculty of making friends. Some weakness in my character, I suspect, excites the sympathy of stronger individualities. I have recently had a very remarkable evidence of the most unselfish generosity; but I need go no further than 'present company,' as they say. Believe me, I sincerely appreciate the interest you take in me and my fortunes."

"A truce to compliments," responded the father, "let us discuss events; and, above all, let me explain why I took the liberty of sending for you."

By this time we were comfortably seated near the stove, in the room that had been set apart for me, and the priest gradually introduced into his conversation the name of Constance Gardner.

"Sœur Constance," he said, "was broken in health when you knew her under her worldly name of Judith Travers. She has not improved since then physically, but she is perfectly happy in her mind. Our Little House

of Mary is a holy place. The sisters do not belong to one of the strictest orders of the Church. Life under the dear Lady Superior is made as cheerful as the constant performance of religious duties will permit. Dame Fridoline belongs to the lay sisterhood, and her harp is heard in the choir. She had a hobby, as you know, for saving money. Only yesterday, she confessed to me what the object of it was and desired my assistance. The hand of Providence must have been in your return to England. Dame Fridoline had an only son who had fallen into bad ways and been sent to prison. She was saving money that she might place him above temptation when he should be released. A letter which she wrote to him a short time since, to the care of the prison authorities, was returned to her, with the information that he had been discharged on a ticket-of-leave, granted to him not only upon the ordinary regulations of the prison, but through the influence of some friends by whom he had once been employed as a decorative artist,

and who were enabled to lay before the Home Secretary some important exculpatory facts connected with his career and his crime.

"Surely you cannot be speaking of George Harmer!" I exclaimed.

"I am. Since his discharge he has made no sign to his mother; and I only gather by the newspaper reports of the story at the Old Bailey that he is the son for whom the harpist has been saving, and who is grieving for news of him. The explanation of his silence is apparent. How could he tell her that he was once more a prisoner, re-committed for trial?"

"Dear me!" I said, "I begin to think that I was born to be useful in spite of the prognostications lavished upon me in my youth that I should come to no good."

"We all have our allotted missions," said the priest.

"I suppose so," I answered; "I do not quite know what mine is yet; my experiences are very mixed, and at present the results are not particularly definite."

"Carry the cross and the civilisation of commerce to those savage islands of the Eastern seas! What higher mission can a man be born to?"

"Poor old lady!" I said, allowing this remark to pass through one ear and out at the other, "what a happy woman she will be, when with news of her son's safety she receives him back to her arms! A mother's love is said to be the most beautiful, self-denying, and the holiest earthly passion.

"It is; and Holy Church has typified it in exalting the Mother of Christ to an equality with Him, which your Protestant Church rejects."

"Indeed," I said, "I am not a theologian, and if I were I believe I should range myself on the side of simplicity of doctrine and ritual, as opposed to complicated faiths and mysterious ceremonials. But let us talk of ——"

"Sœur Constance?" said the priest.

"Yes," I said.

"She has asked about you frequently of late, and on the very day of your return expressed a wish to see you; 'for,' she said, 'I shall be called away soon, and I would like to say good-bye.'"

An hour after this conversation I was being driven with Father Gabriello a few miles out of Antwerp to the Little House of Mary. I had taken a travelling bag, the priest having begged me to remain all night as the guest of the Lady Superior.

"There is a small house not far from the convent gates," he said, "where visitors are provided with beds; and the entertainment is not to be despised even by guests who have visited royalty."

The snow fell as we journeyed onwards. It was quite dark when we arrived at a small house which Father Gabriello entered, telling the man to put up his horse at the blacksmith's close by, where he would be accommodated with refreshment and a bed.

There was no person in the little house except ourselves. Our footsteps sounded

strange and hollow. A pleasant smell of burning wood pervaded the place. The priest struck a match, lighted a candle, and led the way into a small comfortable room, warmed by a modern German stove. A white cloth was laid for supper. The priest placed a candle in the window.

"You appear to be surprised at our quarters?" he said.

"No, I have ceased to be surprised at anything."

"The explanation is very simple," said the priest; "male visitors come to the Little House of Mary, priests, friends, and relations of the sisters; hospitality is one of the divine tenets of the Church; it is dispensed here outside the precincts of the convent."

While he was showing me my room and explaining that we would visit the convent to-morrow, when I might see my sister Constance, as he called her, two lay-sisters came into the house and placed a hot and dainty dinner upon the table. Having

seen us "fall-to" they left us as unceremoniously as they had come.

"You recovered in due time from the youthful madness which was afflicting you at our last meeting; of course I knew you would, with the assistance of the explanation that was given to you by our friend the judge," said the priest as we sipped our coffee.

"Does one ever recover from such madness, as you call it?"

"Oh yes!"

"Your sacred calling forbids that you should speak from experience?" I said.

"I was once a youth and not always a priest," said the father; "but we will talk of you. Let us for example go back to your uncle. Colonel Ernstone told me something touching the matter that separated you."

"I could not comply with a wish that was dear to him; he resented it by disowning me."

"You must have crossed him at a serious point."

"I suppose I did."

"You can atone?"

"I cannot recall the past, I cannot restore the dead to life. Squire Dunstan, in regard to whose views my action was inimical, is no more. His death may even have increased my uncle's grievance."

"He is an old man, and should have ceased to cultivate resentments. You say you have not sought him by message or by letter since your return?"

"No."

"You must."

"I bear no malice," I said, "and I have a real affection for him. But why, Father, do you turn our conversation away from Miss—Sister Constance? Ah, sitting here with you I can almost feel as if to-morrow I should see again the Villa Verona and the gracious lady who——"

"Then, my son, do not encourage such thoughts, unless you can feel that the lady of the Villa is no more."

"No more!" I exclaimed.

"Judith Travers is dead," he said. "But

Sister Constance lives! Attune your mind to that. Listen!"

As he spoke, he opened the lattice. The strains of a distant chant came faintly in upon the cold winter wind. I thought I heard the sound of harps. The voices of the singers were women's. It was like celestial music.

"Think of saint-like women," he said, "on their way to the better land, when you think of Constance Gardner."

I went to bed with these words in my mind, and I awoke in the night, at the sighing of the wind, with them still there. "Think of saint-like women on their way to the better land." I felt lonely and sad. The darkness was black. No sound could be heard but the moaning of the wind. Not even the distant bark of a watch-dog broke in upon the monotony of it, nor any other noise that suggested life or home. I was cold and wretched. "Why did I return?" I asked myself. "Why did I not remain in that land where it is always afternoon?" It

seemed to me that ease and sunshine, and the unsophisticated manners of an uncivilised people, presented far more possibilities of happiness than this every-day world of Europe, with its conventionalities and its everlasting fight for life. And yet I had a vague longing to see my old room at The Cedars, to sit in the garden with my uncle, to chat with Sandy, the old Scotch servant, to fish in the Avon, to ride over the dewy meadows, to wander, gun in hand, over the autumn stubbles.

When I slept I dreamed of Jeffrey Waller and Helen Dunstan. She had gone to live at Manilla, and had become his ward. In command of an expedition to Bulonagan, he had picked up my Irish king in an open boat at sea. He had been defeated in a battle with the Bulonagans, and had escaped in the pinnace of *The Phoebe*, with the carpenter and old Dick Smith. I was in charge of my own steamer, one of the most superb boats ever built on the Clyde. Colonel Ernstone was with me, and we landed, with our

Irish friend and the carpenter, at Manilla, where the merchant received us. I was not the least surprised when Helen Dunstan came forward to welcome us. She was dressed in a picturesque Eastern costume, and looked very handsome. "We are to be married to-morrow!" she said, "and Mr. Waller has arranged that my dear father's spirit shall bless our union at the altar." The Irish king, overhearing her, said he had hoped to find the practice of human sacrifice abolished, at all events in Manilla. "Bi jabers," he exclaimed, slapping me on the back, "have I saved you from the voracious maw of Lofulu, to have you gobbled up by a princess of Manilla?" It seemed perfectly natural that he should say this, and that Helen Dunstan should only smile at him, and take me into the house, which gradually changed from an Oriental dwelling-place, with palms and giant ferns shading the windows, to the cosy library of The Cedars, where my uncle was waiting for us. "Ah, this is as it should be, my dear boy; welcome both of you

to The Cedars, and may we never part again!"

Then I awoke and heard the convent bells chiming through the frosty air. It was morning. There was a thick rime upon the window-panes, and snow upon the branches of a clump of elms that stood like grim and hoary sentinels, guarding the convent gates.

CHAPTER IV.

SISTER CONSTANCE.

Breakfast was served as quietly as the supper of the night before. It will, I hope, not be deemed frivolous, at this period of my narrative, if I pause to say that the coffee was delicious. One got at it, I remember, through a rich head of cream. There were hot rolls and butter that Father Gabriello commended with an approving eye. The little room, with its polished floor, its plain sideboard, its shining stove, its perfume of burning wood, its white table-cloth, and smoking coffee was very home-like and pleasant. The sun was shining upon the frosted window-panes, where a transformation scene was going on, developing a full view

of the roadway and the old chateau, which had been converted into a holy house.

I was glad to be up and talking once more. The night had been full of curious adventures, and I had a feverish longing to talk rather than to think.

"Do you believe in dreams, father?"

"In respect of their manifestations of coming events, or in what respect?"

"Generally I mean."

"The faithful have always seen visions," said the priest, "and in the old days our Heavenly Father conversed with the prophets through dreams."

"I don't think I meant my question to bear the complexion you are putting upon it. Do you think, in these present days, we unconsciously forecast events in dreams?"

"When the mind is under the influence of a particular desire it is a natural thing to dream of its realisation. Have you been dreaming that you were reconciled to your uncle?"

"Well yes, that was a feature of my

dreaming; but it was not a principal, if I may speak of it in that way, of the occurrences that have been coursing through my brain all night."

"A churchman of your Protestant establishment has very shrewdly said, dreams follow the temper of the body and commonly proceed from trouble or disease, business or care; an active head or a mind that is restless; they are the outcome of fear or hope, of wine or passion, or the result of fantastic remembrances; as contingent as if a man should study to make a prophecy, and by saying ten thousand things hits once in a way upon a true one; and that dreams have no certainty because they have no causality, no proportion to those effects which many times they are said to foresignify."

"Then you do not believe in dreams?"

"When they are given to holy men or women for holy purposes, as related in the scriptures, yes, for then the mind is attuned to the divine will and the accepted of Heaven are so etherialised in spirit that they are

capable of a spiritual intercourse with the angels."

"But history, sacred and profane, has examples of visions appearing to unworthy persons for sacred ends; and was it not an ass to which heaven on a great occasion gave the privilege of speech?"

"We are becoming theological," said the priest; "let us talk of the dream that has troubled you, or rather that promises you a boon for which you have been longing perhaps."

"The last of my nocturnal fancies forecast an incident which had not taken possession of my mind. Thoughts of the possibility of my reconciliation with Uncle Grantley may have inspired it; but if you have patience to resume the subject we will revive it at some other time; for I see that your thoughts are beginning to move in the direction of our business here, the contemplation of which makes me feel a trifle nervous, and not a little sad, the more so as it seemed to me last night, awaking and dreaming, that

your last words foreboded the end of Sister Constance's earthly journey."

Breakfast was over now and we were sitting by the stove, Father Gabriello toasting his shins, I smoking a cigarette; yet, while we both as it were tried to comfort the physical side of our natures, the moral would busy itself with that which is solemn, not to say depressing.

"Death is not necessarily a matter for melancholy; it is only sleep after all, sleep and dreams, only that the latter are real," said the priest; "the body rests, decays, disappears, the spirit is released from its dungeon, and being blessed of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, enters into its everlasting joy."

"The heathens of the Eastern seas after all are not much behind the churches in their views of immortality; many of the tribes h ve a similar theory to your own."

"Say faith, hope, not theory," interrupted the priest.

"A similar faith, though others believe

in a sort of transubstantiation; but, as you say, death being the commonest of daily events, the familiar shadow should not overcome us with a sense of gloom and trouble."

"The true Christian, my friend, is not afflicted at the shadow; but to the most truly religious, and to the most sensible of men and women, life is not less solemn than death. All the great phenomena of nature are solemn, and the Son of God was a man of sorrows; the truest happiness is found in the fulfilment of duty, in exorcising ambition, in cultivating a healthy mind in a healthy body, in accepting the present existence as probationary, and in making the best of it."

I think we were both trying, more or less, to ignore the pathos of the blighted life of that lovely woman, who had sought relief, in a living death, from the taint of a cruel world; for Father Gabriello with all his scriptural texts and philosophic teaching, was a man of robust tastes and worldly appetites. In spite of the tone and character of our conversation,

he wrote a memorandum and laid it upon the table as we left the little inn, naming the hour for *déjeuner à la fourchette*, and noting down suggestions for two particular dishes and a certain wine, of which his experience approved.

Soon afterwards, sallying forth into the cold air and crushing the crisp snow under our feet, we passed the sentinel elms, and entered the little House of Mary.

We were received, with other visitors, by an aged lay sister. The other people were ushered into a waiting-room. I and the priest were conducted along a corridor, down one flight of stairs and up another, until we stood in a simple room, one side of which was a grating not unlike a large prison window. A curtain within shut from our gaze the interior beyond.

Presently the curtain was drawn, and an elderly woman of a singularly benevolent countenance appeared. The priest introduced me as Sister Constance's only friend of the outer world, the brother whom she

wished to see. The Lady Superior, addressing me in French, said a few words of welcome, and then spoke of Sœur Constance in terms of great affection.

I heard a footstep coming along the corridor that led to the spot where the Lady Superior was standing. It was slow and halting, and yet it was not the step of an old woman. I felt my heart beating in a strange manner. I was reminded of my poor father's funeral. No thoughts of the Villa Verona came into my mind. If they had they would have been associated, rather with the tomb of the Capulets, than with the balcony scene in that tragic story, whose hero and heroine I had had the audacity to quote to Judith Travers in the days of my youth.

It was a vision of saint-like beauty that stood before me, with great soft eyes and a pale face. It was a voice of infinite gentleness that said, "Brother Horace, I thank you for coming to me. I desired that you should see that I am happy. I wished you to

know that I had not forgotten you. I had an inspiration to say good-bye to you."

"I am glad to fulfil any wish of yours," I said, and I think I spoke in solemn tones as one at a death-bed, "and I hope I may be permitted to see you again."

"That may not be, my brother," she said, "but we will cherish the recollection of this interview. It is permitted to me to-day to speak of the outer world with you. I have many months ago charged the good father to acquaint you with certain matters, the relation of which forms part of what I have chosen myself to regard as a penance and a duty, and in which the good father has promised not to thwart me. You are the only friend I ever had in that world where once I lived. [A tear coursed slowly down her cheek as she spoke]. Since we parted it has been a source of consolation to me that Heaven had kept sacred within my poor heart sufficient purity of thought and hope to awaken the sympathy of a noble and loving nature."

I turned aside to hide the emotion I felt at a confession which indicated so much of the keenness of an old sorrow. What trouble this beautiful woman must have passed through to still be thankful that she had inspired in me a pure and manly sentiment of esteem and love!

"And now Horace, my brother, good-bye, and may the blessed Virgin have you in her constant care!" she said, raising her eyes towards heaven and then letting them rest affectionately on mine.

She put out her hand through the iron bars. I bent my head reverently and kissed it.

The next moment the curtain was drawn and I was alone with Father Gabriello. I sat upon a wooden seat, that filled the eastern end of the room, and stared blankly at the bars and curtains which separated two worlds within a world, two worlds as different from each other as if they were ten thousand miles apart.

Presently we returned to the little house

over the way where luncheon had been prepared for us. I could not eat, and even Father Gabriello seemed to regard the meal, on this occasion, as rather more of a duty than a pleasure People do eat and must eat, even when sorrow and death are of the party. I remember that there was much quiet feasting at Oakfield House when my poor father was buried, and that the liquor flowed freely.

Light feathery snow was flying about as the carriage drew up for our departure. The sun was shining nevertheless, and our coachman gave us a cheery greeting, in which he commended the weather of the new year.

I had forgotten all about the new year, had taken no note of the passing of the old one, or the coming of the new, so thoroughly had the events of the past few days absorbed me.

As we drove along towards Antwerp Father Gabriello spoke continually of Sœur Constance.

"I am to tell you all her story one of these days," said he.

"How ill she looked, yet how beautiful!" I said.

"A Magdalen," he replied, "whose life is a touching lesson, and whose death will give to paradise a spirit that may be welcomed among the Saints. If ever a soul was cleansed of mortal taint it is the soul of Sœur Constance!"

"You knew her before she lived in Italy?" I asked.

"Yes; she attended a chapel where I had a minor charge for a time in London."

"Was it true, the story Mr. Miller told me?" I asked, lowering my voice, for I felt ashamed at the mere suggestion of it.

"I do not know what he told you; but he had opportunities of reporting her correctly."

"I think he exaggerated."

"In what respect?"

"The impossibility of our marriage."

"He could not have exaggerated the undesirability of it."

"His description of her attendant, Madame Fridoline, was an infamy."

"Then it was a lie."

"He said Miss Travers was more notorious than famous."

"That was true."

"Do you know that we lived in the same town as girl and boy?"

"Yes, she told me, and her great desire is that you may remember her only as Constance Gardner, girl and woman."

"I can never think of her as anything but a good, pure, high-minded, suffering creature."

"One who with a righteous training would have been an ornament and a blessing to her sex and to the world," said the priest.

"It does me good to hear you say so."

"I need not say that whatever I may tell you of Sœur Constance is outside the Confessional. She has told me nothing under its sacred seal, and has treated me always as a

friend. When first I met her I gave her advice, not simply as a priest only but as a friend of the friendless; for, though at that time she was a prominent figure in artistic London, she could not, among all the crowd of her admirers, reckon upon one true friend. When they knew that her house in Mayfair was stricken with small-pox not one of them went near her. The doctors were true to her as they are to suffering humanity at large, and with God's blessing they brought her through with an unblemished face and a soul that was purified. I was her confessor, and it was in my presence, on her recovery, that she made gifts to her people, the few who had remained with her, and announced her retirement from the stage and from the world. The old woman, Mrs. Harmer, known to you as Madame Fridoline, never left her side."

"Why have I not seen her again?" I asked.

"She preferred that you should not, but she shall know what you have done for her

son, and shall yet have an opportunity of thanking you."

Arrived at the hotel the priest said, "And now Mr. Durand I must say good-bye for the present; I am not staying at this hotel, and I have some duties here that require my attention."

"We shall meet again, of course," I said.

"Oh yes, often I hope."

While we were shaking hands, the landlord of the inn informed me that a gentleman, who was accompanied by two ladies, was waiting to see me.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH I MEET MY MOTHER AND HELEN DUNSTAN AT ANTWERP.

I felt towards Constance Gardner as one dead, — a beautiful creature I had known in a dream. I think I associated her with my father in heaven. The thought of love as connected with her in a worldly sense would now have been a sort of sacrilege. She filled my thoughts as a sacred story might. I could no longer realise the idea that she had inspired my first passion. The lady of the Villa Verona was a different being altogether. Calypso had indeed become Darthula. The Juliet, with pouting lips and soft warm hand, was now the Juliet of the tomb. She was a saint whose hand I kissed, a saint on her way to Paradise.

"Your mother is here," said Colonel Ernstone, in his blunt soldierly fashion, "your mother—and Miss Dunstan."

"Give me a little rest" I said, "I am in no condition to see any one at present."

"You look ill, that's a fact," said Ernstone.

"I am quite well, but I have had a shock," I said.

"Hang me, but we shall drive you mad among us! We are keeping you in a chronic state of shock, it seems to me. May I ring the bell?"

"Certainly."

"Waiter, a bottle of Champagne, Röderer, and anchovy toast."

"*Bien, Monsieur.*"

"You must keep yourself up," said Ernstone. "This is the time of day to drink champagne, and you are just in the condition when it is good for a man."

I accepted his prescription.

"You are in trouble?"

"No."

"Something serious has happened?"

"Yes, serious enough. I have said good-bye to Constance Gardner for ever."

"But you had long since ceased to contemplate the possibility of——"

"You don't understand me; Constance Gardner has not long to live; there was death in her thin hand, when she laid it in mine only two hours ago."

"Poor child! You have been to the Little House of Mary with Father Gabriello. A kind, benevolent, good-hearted priest as ever I knew."

"Yes."

"You must not dwell on your visit; you have other duties; and the world has claims upon you. I dare say that sister of the Church is happy in her way. Once religion has fairly taken hold of you, death means pleasure. There is a sort of arrogance in it as if we who live are to be pitied. I have seen it on the battle-field and in hospitals, among both friends and foes.

"She looked very beautiful," I said,

"but so thin and fragile, so pale, and with such great tearful eyes—it was a heart-breaking sight to see, Ernstone."

"No doubt, the poor child! And of course you would feel it keenly; but did she not seem happy?"

"Yes, I think so, very; there was a kind of supreme content in her words and manner."

Ernstone furtively filled my glass and pushed it towards me.

"No, no, I cannot drink; it is of no use your trying to drown my feelings; it is much better to let them have full play, or give them rest in——"

"A change of subject," he said, finishing the sentence, "and that is what I propose. Let us talk of your mother and Helen Dunstan."

I stirred the fire and looked into the burning coals as he rattled on.

"Your mother is one of the most delightful women I ever met," he said, "and her friendship for Helen Dunstan is that of a sister. Most extraordinary thing they should

happen to be in the neighbourhood, just as Fate whisks you off from London and lands you here. I begin to think I am a regular confirmed believer in destiny now, just as Napoleon was. I remarked it only an hour ago to your mother, whereupon Miss Dunstan said if Horace Durand is Destiny, then Mrs. Welby believes in Destiny also. Clever, eh? And a well-turned compliment."

"It is odd that my mother should have taken so many years for the development of her faith in me," I could not help saying, with a touch of bitterness in the recollection of how little I owed to my mother's practical interest in me.

"It was Fate, my dear boy, Fate and Welby. She could not help it. Think how young she was, and how overbearing that master mind of the Welby nature could be. My dear Horace, don't revive the disagreeables of the past. Think of all the pleasant things you can. God bless my life, what it is to have a mother at all, and such a mother! I don't care whether she was all

the youthful mind could wish or not; that is not the question; at this moment you ought to be the happiest fellow alive."

I walked about the room as he went on talking. I do not think he quite appreciated the state of my feelings. I could not adapt them all at once to the late sudden changes of Fate's kaleidoscope. One set of startling pictures and strange events had succeeded another set so quickly, that I was bewildered with the varied claims which they made upon me.

My mother! I hardly remembered the time when that sweet name had ever stirred me much. It was my father whom I loved most; indeed it was only my father who had cared as it seemed to win my young affections. And yet I had dim memories of gentle domestic scenes, in which my mother was a charming picture of girlhood with a very little boy at her knees. I recalled her sitting at the square piano. This brought back the image of my father pouring his great soul into his violoncello; but these reminis-

cences culminated unhappily in that parting when my step-father dragged me from my mother's arms and threatened me.

As I had grown older I had bitterly resented my mother's marriage with Welby, whom I hated now with what I considered to be a justifiable loathing; yet he made patriotic speeches in Parliament and was beloved of the people, if one might judge by their cheers and the eulogistic articles which many leading newspapers wrote about him. I had already secretly promised myself the luxury of attacking him with all the literary skill I could command, and my thoughts, busy as they were, had found room to recall my uncle's suggestion that I might one day fight him for his seat in Parliament.

How could I meet my mother, with these feelings active within me? And how could she meet a son whom she had neglected all these years?

"I know your sentiments towards Welby," Ernstone said by-and-bye, "but that need not embarrass you in regard to

your mother. It is true they live together in the same house, but only out of respect to society. They may be called friends, but nothing more. Mrs. Welby has her own mission; he has his; don't let your dislike of him steel your heart against your mother."

"Has she sought this meeting?"

"She has."

"And Miss Dunstan?"

"She knows nothing of the details of the row you had with your uncle."

"Did the poor old Squire know?"

"Yes."

"And nothing passed on the subject between him and his daughter?"

"I conclude not."

"Does she know anything about 'that scandal with an actress at Baveno,' as they called it in Worcestershire?"

"Yes."

"What does she know?"

"Only what I have told her."

"And what is that? And when did you speak of it?"

"It is quite four years ago since I explained some of the circumstances of your infatuation. I saw that certain reports which had reached her caused her pain; and therefore told her frankly what had taken place."

"Thank you, Ernstone; you are a true friend."

"I hope so," said the colonel, "my view is that the truth never hurts an honest fellow, and so I told your uncle. But he was too much annoyed to listen. She was disappointed too, but not so much so when she knew that no disgrace attended the circumstances of your Italian adventure. I am quite sure she would have been very indignant if she had known exactly why you and your uncle parted."

"Does she know why I am here?"

"Partly."

"She is very rich, is she not?"

"Yes, no doubt; though it is reported she has had some heavy losses lately through a great failure in a mining speculation

which the honourable Mr. Welby, M.P. had induced her to put money in."

"The scoundrel!"

"Then she has given away enormous sums; nobody knows how much except the late Squire's solicitors, who are continually struggling against what they call her philanthropic extravagance. She has several regular almoners, and she conducts her business of charity upon a system that is marvellous. There is as much discipline and administration in the work as there is in the command of a regiment. She has reports, dispatches, inquiries, books of account, emigration schemes, house-to-house visitations, loan-offices, and the deuce knows what. Her idea of charity is no perfunctory affair, I can tell you. She goes about herself into all kinds of places, Mrs. Welby with her; and not long since she kept me for two hours listening to an account of some of the cases of imposture with which they have had to contend, the charity-mongering they meet, the elaborate schemes for turning the stream

of public benevolence into private channels which they have been fortunate enough to frustrate; and I have often thought of an old theory of yours, while talking with the dear girl, that women go into the profession of philanthropy and immerse themselves in convents, because they are crossed in love."

"Did I say so?"

"Of course you did."

"I hope you don't remember all the foolish things I used to say."

"I don't call that foolish anyhow, and you have every reason to put it down among your wisest reflections."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes. But are you thinking about what I am saying to you? Or are you still wool-gathering?"

"I am preparing myself for a very trying meeting."

"Will you let me arrange it?"

"I think so. What do you propose?"

"To bring the two ladies here straight."

"No, I don't believe I could stand that; I would rather see my mother alone."

"You are a sly dog, Horace," said Ernstone; "that means you are to see Helen alone also, of course."

"Is that being a sly dog?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Then I am one," I said, now earnestly trying to respond to his efforts to make me cheerful. "I remember my uncle telling me that I was a lucky dog years ago when his views for me in that direction were favoured by her father."

"I shall go and fetch your mother," said Ernstone.

"No, it is my duty surely to go to her."

"As you please, I will prepare her for your visit."

The music of the familiar chimes rippled through the frosty air as I waited for his return. They touched new chords in my heart and were less plaintive than of yore. I looked out into the square. The snow was glittering in the sunshine.

"She is ready to receive you," said Ernstone returning; "turn to the right as you leave this room and knock at the second door."

"Come in," said a soft voice.

I saw before me a slight, pretty woman, in a purple velvet dress with a rich lace collar; the girl-mother I had known grown into a woman. Her lips moved as if she would speak; and the next moment she lay weeping in my arms.

"Horace!" she said, between her sobs, "can you forgive me?"

"I am your son, mother, I have nothing to forgive," I answered, smoothing her brown hair, and kissing her upturned tearful face.

With my arm around her waist, I led her to a sofa. We sat down together.

"Why, great heavens, mother!" I said, "you are only a woman now; what a girl you must have been at Oakfield House!"

"And I had no mother to counsel me," she said, the tears filling her blue eyes; "I

was a weak, vain, poor creature, and I do not deserve this present happiness.

"Mother!" I said, "I made you cry when we parted all those years ago; but these I trust are tears of joy."

I kissed her again, and she laid her head upon my shoulder.

"How you must have suffered, my dear!" she said.

"And you?"

"I have prayed day and night for this reunion," she answered.

"Why how small you are!" I said rising and standing apart from her.

"You are so tall!" she replied.

"I remember when I was not up to your shoulders," I said, "and now you are not as high as mine."

"If I am high enough to reach your heart, Horace, I am content."

"God bless you, mother!" I exclaimed.

"He has blessed me in this longed-for embrace," she answered, "and I hope I may not commit the sin of being too proud and vain of you."

After the first pressure of delight at our reconciliation had passed my mother asked me scores of questions and answered as many that I did not ask her. She told me that I should find her greatly changed, she hoped for the better; that she had educated herself in many directions. "I am not the silly little mother you knew at Scarsdale." Then she spoke of Miss Dunstan, and their great friendship for each other; how they had often and often talked of me; and how they had wept together with delight over the newspaper accounts of my escape and return.

"May I bring her to you?" she said suddenly.

"Yes, mother."

I was like a child with a new toy in the use of that most lovely word "mother." I never addressed her without it. "Mother!" To look at her, she might rather have been my sister, and a little sister at that. She left me to go into an adjoining room, and to return with a lady more than a head taller than herself, a very Diana indeed, the grace-

ful, unsophisticated but high-spirited girl of the Worcestershire valley, with the dignified bearing of a splendid womanhood.

"Mr. Durand," she said, putting out her hand, "I am very glad to see you again."

"Thank you, Miss Dunstan; it is worth while to have gone away for the pleasure of this welcome back."

There was a warm cordiality in the grip of her hand, and a quick blush passed over her face.

"You have seen many strange adventures and many wonderful countries," she said.

"Yes," I said, "and yet now that I have shaken hands with you, and heard you speak once more, I could almost imagine that it has been all a dream."

"We have often talked of you, your mother and I. Were you not surprised to hear of our having become friends and companions?"

"It gave me great satisfaction," I said.

When I knew her first, Helen Dunstan

was a tall girl with a slight figure. Five years had finished and rounded off her charms. The lady of the Villa Verona, in those mad days of Baveno, was not more graciously endowed, with swelling bust and graceful lines of beauty, than this Helen Dunstan grown into womanhood. Moreover there was a dignity of bearing in her manner that I had never seen in any other woman. It seemed an unconscious condescension on her part to be of the world and in it; and, when I say this, I am thinking more of goddesses than angels. She wore an olive-green velvet gown, the waist fastened with an antique silver clasp, and round the throat and at the wrists ruffles of old point lace.

"What interesting things you will have to tell your mother," said Helen; "Colonel Ernstone says your experiences are stranger than any novel he has ever read."

"I fear he overrates my adventures or underrates the novels; though I have indeed seen some remarkable things."

"What a terrible shipwreck!" she said,

lifting up her liquid eyes to mine with a world of wondering expression in them, "and to think that we should none of us have recognised you in the Mr. Horris of the carpenter's story! If we had had any idea that you had gone to sea, I suppose it might have occurred to us."

"I ought to have written to the dear old squire, your father," I said, "he must have thought me very ungrateful; it was a sore shock to me, believe me, Miss Dunstan, when I learnt that I should see him no more in this world. Forgive me for arousing sad recollections, but I feel a great constraint in speaking to you without mentioning him. I do not myself think we should cease to talk of dear friends when they have only gone before us to that other country."

I saw a tear trickle slowly down her cheek, and I went on talking of the squire, for his memory was a bond of sympathy between us.

"It seems to me that some of the savage people are wiser in this matter than we are;

such for instance as those who regard their dead as fortunate in having gone to a happier country. Your father was always a good friend to me, and I have often thought of Warrington Manor when I never expected to see it again.

"Do not apologise, Mr. Durand, for mentioning my dear father. It is kind of you, and it shows that travel has not changed your generous nature. Mrs. Welby and I have talked you over in this respect you may be sure."

"And with more kindly consideration than I deserve, I make no doubt," I said.

"No, Horace, we have only done justice to you," said my mother.

"As if a mother," I answered, "would be content with doing mere justice to her son. Perhaps I can in return say to my mother more than I might say at this happy moment to Miss Dunstan. Next to the natural happiness a son must feel at the welcome home, which he receives from a loving mother, is in my case the pleasure

which I experience in meeting again the daughter of my dear old friend. Believe me, Miss Dunstan, I am deeply touched at this proof of the continuation of your friendly interest in me—your runaway vagabond neighbour."

"My dear Mr. Durand," said Helen Dunstan, in a voice slightly tremulous, "I do not forget old friends, and I take great pleasure in congratulating you upon your escape from many perils, and upon the honest honourable fame you have won for yourself, and which I never doubted you would achieve."

I was deeply touched at this tribute of a noble woman, all the more so that I felt it was undeserved.

"Thank you, Miss Dunstan," I said, vainly endeavouring to conceal my emotion, "it was very good of you to think so well of me, especially when you must have heard many things calculated to shake your good opinion."

"True friends only remember the good they know of each other, when scandal is busy with their names," she said.

At this moment there was a tap at the door. My mother got up and opened it.

"Colonel Ernstone!" she exclaimed.

"I hope I don't intrude," he said, "as the old fellow says in the play, but the truth is, I begin to feel jealous."

"And well you may," said my mother, "you must have begun to think we were going to monopolise Horace altogether."

"My dear Mrs. Welby, I am not jealous of you and Miss Dunstan. I am jealous of Horace, jealous of his monopoly of two ladies who thought something of me a few hours ago, and who now find metal more attractive in this lion from the East. Ah well, it is just like your fickle sex; I ought to have known it would be so."

"Ah, my dear old friend," I said, taking his hand, "I shall never be able to repay your kindness."

"Nonsense! do you think you owe this meeting to me, for instance? Nonsense! your mother was dying to see you and——"

"But for Colonel Ernstone would have missed you," said Helen; "we were starting for London when we received Colonel Ernstone's telegram to await him at Brussels, as you had just left for Antwerp."

"Always meddling in my affairs; just like him," I said, "bless his kind heart!"

"It is true," he said, "I have become a regular Paul Pry, I feel it. What shall we have for dinner? It is a most momentous question I assure you. Fitz is waiting for orders. He has suggested *potage parmentière*, turbot with *sauce crevettes*, *côtelette d'Agneau à la purée de marrons*, *poularde en demi-deuil*, *filet de bœuf à la Renaissance*, *bécasse au cresson*, and half-a-dozen startling *entremets*."

The dear fellow saw that we were all more or less under the influence of strong emotions; and this is how he relieved the strain of the situation.

"If the ladies have nothing to suggest and you, Horace, have no special dish to mention, I think I can manage it," he said; "I mean to put the *chef* on his mettle."

My mother and Helen smiled. They both estimated correctly, as I did, this interruption.

"Very well then, if you have nothing to say I shall order the dinner," he said.

He left the room for a moment to speak to Fritz and then returned.

"Dinner at six, continental time; and that will give us leisure for a drive. The carriage is at the door. Come along Horace and leave the ladies to select their cloaks and discuss their driving bonnets. It is very cold, Miss Dunstan, put on your warmest cloak! And, Mrs. Welby, don't forget your shawls. You see (turning to me) I am obliged to think for them; they left their maids at Brussels. We will attend you (turning to them) in the hall. The light will soon be gone; so we must hurry. Just have time for a nice little drive; and

Fritz can lay the cloth for dinner while we are off the premises.

As the ladies disappeared Ernstone took me forcibly by the arm and dragged me away to my own rooms.

CHAPTER VI.

STILL LINGERS UNDER THE CHIMES AT ANTWERP.

"I congratulate you, myself, everybody!" Ernstone exclaimed, as he closed the door, "I never doubted the result, nor did they, although your mother thought it best to have no servants about to tattle, as she said; so, with your leave, we will all go to Brussels together in the morning, 'a happy family, and without a scene,' to quote your mother again, for servants to talk about."

"You seem to have had a general council of war at Brussels," I said.

"Yes, and you are our Waterloo," responded Ernstone; "there was a sound of revelry by night."

"My dear Earnstone are you not making

too much of this business? My vanity will begin to be excited."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Ernstone, "you ought to be the proudest fellow alive, with such a mother and such a——"

He hesitated.

"A what?" I asked

"A prospect of happiness," he said.

"My mother is an enigma," I answered; "she must have been a weak-minded unsophisticated, I was almost going to say foolish, little woman when I was a boy, and now——"

"She is as clever as she is amiable, and as amiable as she is pretty," said Ernstone; "you take after your father, I suppose, you are not half as goodlooking as your mother."

"My father, God rest him, was one of the best men that ever lived, and I say that in even your presence," I replied; "I count him first, you second, and my dear hot-headed old uncle third."

"Thank you for self and uncle. Won't he be pleased when he hears——"

"Hears what?"

"That you and Miss Dunstan have met, and that you have mutually resumed the flirtation which was only postponed till after your trip to Italy."

"Do you think there is anything more than the renewal of an old friendship in all this?"

"Ask me if I have eyes and ears? Ask me if I am a fool? But don't put these questions to me just now. We must join the ladies."

"You are kindly-thoughtfulness embodied," I said; "I wonder if I ought to feel very happy. I don't think I ought, but I do."

Once or twice it seemed to me as if that saint-like figure of the House of Mary threw a shadow over my sudden and unexpected happiness; but the human heart has a trick of turning to the sunny side of life, and I confess that mine glowed with the warmth of new sensations. To be a perfect hero, I suppose, I ought to have buried my love and

happiness and all concurrent joys in a living tomb with Constance Gardner, but I do not profess to be at all a model hero or a representative man. I am rather one of the world's accidents, a person who has become famous in spite of himself, a waif and stray, yet a favourite of Fortune, an example of the truth of the saying, that "a cloudy morning ofttimes brings forth a pleasant day." The morning of my life was cloudy enough, Heaven knows, and storm and tempest struck me in youth and in manhood; but I am like a barque that has been rent and torn at sea, to be driven at last by stress of weather into the port of Good Fortune, to refit and take up a freight of precious stores.

It was very strange to me to be packed into a carriage with ladies at all; but to sit with my arm round one of them and the other leaning towards me, the better to hear my answers to her questions, was a blissful novelty. Ernstone pretended he was jealous of me; but he smiled and looked as happy as any of us. Every spark of resentment in

regard to my mother had gone out of me. I loved her as if she had been the gentlest and most affectionate mother ever boy or man had known.

"You cannot dream how happy I am," she whispered to me; "I live for the first time to-day, Horace."

I thought of the dream of yesterday, and remembered that she was not in it. "How poorly dreams forecast the future!" I thought, "and then I saw my uncle welcoming those two people at 'The Cedars.'"

"And you are glad to see Helen Dunstan again?" whispered my mother.

"Yes, mother."

"Is she not beautiful?"

"Very."

"If I could call her daughter, as well as friend, Horace, I should have nothing else to live for."

"Then we will not talk of it," I said; "I want you to live for me only."

"To-day's *Débats*," said Ernstone, "has

a curious account of your projected expedition copied from *The Standard*."

"But you do not think of accompanying an expedition, even if it does go out?" my mother asked with a quick expression of alarm in her voice.

"I do not expect to leave England again for some time, mother," I said, "and, when I do, we will go together."

"And Helen?" she whispered.

"Ah, she does not know why my uncle sent me away; I will tell you one of these days."

"I believe I heard my name," said Helen, for indeed she could not help it; my mother was so overjoyed with her new position, and so bent on making me still happier than I was, that she continually introduced Helen into all her plans for the future.

"I was saying that you must come too," said my mother.

"Why, of course," said Ernstone; "and 'me too,' as the American politician said."

"I am not a good sailor," rejoined Helen

quietly, not willing evidently to have my hand forced by my mother, who could not, nor did she try to, disguise the nature of her feelings in regard to Helen and myself.

A pleasant drive, a cosy dinner, and a long delightful talk afterwards, made time fly. It was nearly midnight before we separated. We dined in my room; after dessert the ladies retired to their own, and we joined them again for coffee. The shutters were closely clasped against the cold without, the curtains drawn to concentrate the warmth within. There was an open fire-place in the room. We sat around it and talked. My mother laid her hand in mine and listened to stories of my adventures, and Colonel Ernstone annotated them with lively sallies. But I was, I am bound to say, most interested in the passing remarks of Helen Dunstan. My heart was full of a new kind of sympathy in respect of my mother. To be reconciled with her was a delicious sensation, akin to the calm rest at an oasis in the desert, after a long,

weary, and dangerous march. In my feelings towards Helen Dunstan I recognised a certain dumb expression of anxiety. I found my eyes wandering to her expressive face for an approving glance. With all the dignity of her appearance, the grace of her carriage, the striking beauty of her regular features, the stately pose of her well-shaped head, there was a soft pensiveness in the expression of her eyes that went straight to my heart. She combined with the form and figure of Diana the soul of a gentle, loving woman. It is the privilege of the sex to outdo each other in their conquests of the susceptible heart of man. The barrier, which at one time had existed between the possibility of a union between myself and Helen Dunstan, had in a worldly sense been removed when Constance Gardner fled from Italy; but the reader will remember my scornful repudiation of the suggestions of Mr. Justice Miller and Colonel Ernstone that I should outlive my hot love for the lady of the Villa Verona. They were right, nevertheless, to this extent,

that my heart had come to recognise the utter impossibility of realising the hopes that once had wholly possessed it. A bride of the Church, Constance Gardner was now as much beyond my reach as if she had married in the world. Apart from this, the slander, on the evidence of Mr. Miller, against her reputation had gradually thrust her further away from me, and converted an ardent passion of love into pity; while my recent interview with her had lifted her entirely out of the pale of human hopes and fears, beyond all considerations of this work-a-day world. I fear some of my lady readers will regard these observations in the light of special pleading —a man's defence of man's fickleness; for it is impossible to deny that the passion of my first love had been cooling down ever since it may be said to have reached boiling point, to gradually simmer into brotherly interest, and finally to settle down into pity. There was a time when I would have married Constance Gardner, at the sacrifice of the respect and friendship of every person I had ever

known, and at the risk of awakening one morning to a feeling of contempt for myself, with, of course, a misanthropic view of the world in general. I ought to feel grateful to Mr. Miller (but I do not) for checking me in the full career of my infatuation. It was the woman herself who saved me, in the which she showed a far higher magnanimity, I think, than a man is capable of, where his heart, or perhaps one might more correctly say his passions are concerned. Poor Constance! There were possibilities in her nature, and in her career, which only the Infinite can understand or estimate aright, and will be taken into account when she stands forward for judgment.

Long after the ladies had retired we sat together by the fire in my room, Ernstone and I, and smoked. For a long time we neither of us spoke. We looked into the burning coals and encouraged our inner reflections. There is no truer proof of a sympathetic friendship than is shown in the fact of two men enjoying each other's

society silently as in the full tide of conversational intercourse. A pipe or a cigar helps this quiet communion of two kindred souls.

It was a relief to sit and think. My thoughts were in a strange tangle.

"When shall we go down to Breedon?" Ernstone asked presently.

"Do you think my uncle will expect me?"

"I dare lay odds he is all anxiety to see you."

"And yet he makes no sign."

"What sign would you have?"

"A letter, a message, anything."

"Supposing we all go down together? Miss Dunstan has not been into Worcestershire since her father's death."

"It would be a sad journey then; and I confess that I look forward to going to Breedon with more or less of a melancholy feeling. It was a bitter thing for my uncle to thrust me out upon the world. Great heavens, when I think of it, even now, I can hear the rustle of the chill October winds

in the reeds by the river; and I can see myself a shivering, penniless, wretch, tramping through the night, and standing at last on the quay at Gloucester, with a strong sense of misery."

"Ah, if the truth were known, Dick Grantley suffered as much as you did yourself; though his confounded obstinacy would not let him own it."

"He had no right to treat me so cruelly. Because he was kind to me when I needed it, he had not bought me body and soul. I was not his chattel."

"It was in your interest that he was angry with you."

"But, when he saw that something had occurred which made it impossible for me to do what he wished, his heart should have been big enough to make allowances for me."

"The truth is, when one gets to be an old fellow," said Ernstone, "one expects a young one to act just as if he had gone through all our experience; and it is a

peculiarity of youth that it insists upon buying its own experience."

"I am not sure that I ought to make any advance towards a reconciliation with my uncle," I said, smarting at the moment under the recollection of that night march in the bleak autumn weather, and conscious of having been left to fight my own way through indescribable difficulties, and to find my best friends among strangers.

"I rather think," said Ernstone, "your uncle will invite us all to 'The Cedars.' But you promised to tell me all about your interview with the solicitors of that extraordinary partner of yours, Mr. Jeffrey Waller."

"Another time," I said.

"You are hipped! What is it?"

"Reaction, I suppose, the touch of pain that follows pleasure."

"There is no pretty Manilla girl or Sooloo beauty out yonder," suggested Ernstone, "who is just now putting in a claim for remembrance, eh?"

"No, but there are moments when I think the merchant is right in preferring to live there rather than here."

"You are in the humour to think anything just now; your condition of mind is akin to the drop-down which an overdose of champagne gives a fellow; you go up to a giddy height of bliss, and you come down like an exploded balloon. I think we will go to bed. Rest is what you want. Good-night, my boy, you will be all right in the morning."

And so we parted for the night.

In my bed-room the fire had subsided into a glow of ruddy embers. I drew my chair before it and planted my feet upon the fender. It was a great old-fashioned room, with a four-post bedstead, a heavy mahogany wardrobe, and on the walls some half-faded tapestry, illustrating a boar-hunt. The candles made deep shadows here and there, and the red glare of the fire fell on the hearth-rug. The shutters were closed and over them the curtains were

drawn. The bells up in the tower outside played their fantastic chimes. I hung upon the weird music, and thought of the convent and its pathetic story of disappointment. Then my thoughts wandered to George Harmer's honeymoon and its terrible eclipse. I saw in imagination that Belgian scoundrel of the Brussels Gardens following up the cue the wretched woman gave him, and gradually compassing the decorative painter's ruin. I pictured the prison in which he had suffered, and I seemed to see his white face, in the burning coals, as he stood forward to confront Fate in the dock at the Old Bailey. Then the chimes ceased and my thoughts wandered away to Sooloo, to Brunei, to Boulonagan, to Kututu, to come back again, with reminiscences of Motley and the Spanish fury, to this unexpected and sudden visit to Antwerp. At last I lost myself among the counterpanes, blankets, and curtains of the old four-post bedstead; and when I awoke it was noon.

"Your mother was getting alarmed at

your long sleep," said Ernstone, who came into my room with Fritz and the coffee, "but I would not have you disturbed until you rang your bell."

"Thank you very much; I feel 'as fresh as paint,' as an old shipmate of mine used to say when he was particularly well. I have slept as soundly as I used to do in the fo'castle of *The Phoebe*."

"With a better meal awaiting you than ship's allowance," said Ernstone; "and the blues of last night?"

"All gone," I said.

"Then we will let in the sunshine."

He drew the curtains as he spoke and disclosed a bright blue sky.

"The ladies have been out and all over the city; it is a glorious morning, frosty but kindly. We shall all meet at breakfast in an hour; will that suit you?"

"Yes, capitally," I said; and away went Ernstone to report me.

I almost felt ashamed at monopolising so much of this stalwart fellow's time and

attention, especially when I thought of his position and his deeds. I felt as a subaltern might who had been unduly promoted to a position in which he had the general of a brigade for his *aide-de-camp*. Now and then I found myself wondering whether all I was doing would turn out to be a dream, and whether I should awaken standing cold, wet, and hungry on the quay at Gloucester.

Helen Dunstan was a picture of rosy health as she came into my mother's room to breakfast, escorted by Ernstone. They were a striking couple, she a tall commanding figure in a clinging morning gown, he still taller, with iron-grey hair and moustache. But that he was twenty years her senior and looked it, an earnest lover of Helen Dunstan might have felt a twinge of jealousy of the gallant officer.

"Was I Helen Dunstan's lover?" I asked myself more than once during the day, in connection with this thought, that emphasised the physical beauty of these two representative English figures.

CHAPTER VII.

REFLECTIONS AND REMINISCENCES.

It is somewhat of a satire on human life and hopes that, while Helen Dunstan was fanning the embers of an old friendship into a flame that very closely resembled love, Constance Gardner was passing away to that land where there is no marrying nor giving in marriage, with my name upon her lips.

The reader already understands that the relationship between Father Gabriello and Sœur Constance was something more than that implied by their respective positions. He had been her worldly as well as her spiritual adviser. He was her trustee in this

world, her sponsor for the world to come. She had appealed to him on a bed of sickness, and had acted upon his advice when, rescued from a hateful disease, she had become strong again, and in full possession of her many personal charms. Her almoner, her friend, her fatherly protector, he had obtained that dispensation from the Pope, which had opened to her the arms of the Church, and given her a home in the little House of Mary, which, if it belonged to one of the lowest and least restricted orders of the Church, was nevertheless known for the abundance of its charities. I may not enter into further explanations of my knowledge of the details set forth in the next chapter than is suggested in these remarks, except to add by way of emphasis, what you already know, that Sœur Constance had made it a matter of personal penance not only to refuse the seal of privacy on her confessions, but had made it obligatory upon Father Gabriello to acquaint me with all the particulars of her history since the day when

(as related in an early chapter of this work) she ran away from Scarsdale. In laying the circumstances before the reader I have chosen to adapt the priestly record to my own narratory method, or want of method, for which I crave the forgiveness of Father Gabriello, and the tender consideration of those critics who may detect in the arrangement some breach of the artistic principles that govern the construction of an autobiographic record.

It is quite certain that Sœur Constance did tell her own story, and it is equally certain that the leading points of it are known in the artistic circles of London. Whether it came to my knowledge in the exact form in which I convey it to the reader is a matter which after all is of no moment. It is not intended as a slur upon the stage, but it may be taken as fairly illustrating a phase of theatrical life which was more common a few years ago than it is to-day, and which, with a growing educational taste and a higher appreciation of Dramatic

Art, may one day become impossible. The reader will note that both Colonel Ernstone and myself were right in our estimate of the very colourable statement, which Mr. Miller made to me in regard to what had transpired on his visit to the Villa Verona, at a certain critical period of my fortunes. I learnt afterwards that his version of what had transpired between himself and Fridoline (Mrs. Harmer) was also greatly exaggerated, for the purpose no doubt of intensifying the impression he wished to make upon me.

"His motive was a good one," said Colonel Ernstone, "and that must be taken into account; besides which, my dear Horace, so far as the poor lady herself was concerned, he said less against Judith Travers than Judith Travers has said against herself."

"In my then frame of mind I think if he had said more I should have strangled him."

"I think you would," said Ernstone; "and, with far more occasion for resentment, I have often wondered, since then, why Shakespeare did not make Claudio run his

sword through Don John when, without rhyme or reason, as it seems to me, he steps up to the two princes and deliberately utters his pestilent libels against Hero."

"Poor Connie! she was caught in the net just as completely as Marguerite," I said, without paying much attention to my friend; for it jarred on me to remember that Hero lived to establish her innocence and to marry the man of her choice. "And in her case the Mephistophiles was in petticoats! Is it not a cruel blight upon a noble art, that certain so-called patrons of the drama should dare to introduce into theatres the sort of creature who, as in the case of the temptress of Judith Travers, was the agent of evil, and who to-day, according to newspaper gossips and censors of the stage, still demoralises the stage?"

"My dear Horace, all conditions of life are more or less tainted by the moral leprosy to which you refer. In connection with the stage, it is more apparent than in other places. The truth is, some of the London

theatres are in the hands of men who neither understand nor respect art. They are mere vulgar money-makers, and they are not particular how they grow rich."

"Is that so? But I have heard you speak of So-and-so and So-and-so in high terms of respect, and yet I see their names advertised in the announcements of several theatres."

"And I hope you will understand that I am sincere. The stage can give to the world patterns of virtue and womanliness that are not be excelled in any class of society. It may also be quoted *per contra*, as the merchant would say; and the *per contras* are well known. As a rule they are not clever, and as a rule they are under the protection of so-called distinguished patrons of the drama. A fellow of Ours, a lieutenant, married an actress, one of the best little women that ever lived, and I know two leading artistic families in town that are model households. Poor Judith Travers, as you have often said, if she had only been well

brought up, had in her the making of a splendid woman."

"When I was a boy, Ernstone, she was literally a waif and stray of Scarsdale, a child whom some people looked upon as uncanny, her grandmother being reputed to be a witch. If I had been older instead of younger than Connie, I should probably have gone off with her after those strolling players. Think of it! In that case I should not have been likely ever to have been received at 'The Cedars'; I should not have known you, nor Squire Dunstan, nor ever perhaps have been reconciled to my mother ——"

"Nor have experienced the bliss of knowing Helen Dunstan," interposed Ernstone.

"I should probably have become an actor, a great actor,—who knows?—and in that case Horace and Mrs. Durand might have conducted a theatre together, and rivalled in respectability the managerial families you know in London."

"If! 'There is much virtue in an if,' one of the play-actors says somewhere," observed Ernstone.

"I don't know about the virtue of it, Ernstone," I answered, "without for a moment going against my Shakespeare, but it is a very powerful factor in the destinies of a fellow, considered from my point of view."

"And do you think you would have preferred the career you have just sketched out to the reality?"

"I can hardly imagine a world that would have been tolerable without I had known you in it, and without this meeting with my mother; and I would not barter my recollections of Breedon and Warrington Manor for anything; though I think it would all be very tame without my wanderings in the Eastern Seas. To speak frankly, I believe I am quite content to be what I am and who I am; and I would not blot out either Constance Gardner or Judith Travers. Parting with the first by the Scars-

dale river, and with the second, a saint-like penitent, on her way to heaven—are pathetic episodes in a stormy life which——"

"'Make all the world kin,'" said Ernstone, "and you and I in particular; sorrows bind men together more than pleasures. But I will not have you pursue this theme to make us both sad."

"There is something akin to pleasure in pain itself," I said, "and I think I taste sweetness even in the bitter of that poor martyr's confession."

* * * * *

We have already seen that Ernstone, who had the reputation of being a cynic and a matter-of-fact man of the world, was really a man of sentiment. If time permitted and the occasion warranted it, I think I could also discover him to you as a literary critic of no mean order.

"I am not sure that you are justified," he says, "in giving to the world any details of that poor woman's life, however much

good it may do as a warning and an example."

If I were writing this narrative for Colonel Ernstone I should of course act upon his advice. As I approach the end of my task I begin to wonder what he will say to my revelations concerning himself and the Hallams. In this matter I have, it is true, protected myself, and them, by using fictitious names, and transplanting the locale of events to districts not associated with either family. One is bound to pay some deference to social proprieties, even in an autobiographical romance which is more or less true, and more or less a contribution to current history.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONFESSION OF JUDITH TRAVERS, OTHERWISE CONSTANCE GARDNER.

"If you think the exhibition of my heart will help you to read your own; if you think the confession of my secret and blighted life will be a warning to you; if you feel that my present holy rest will encourage your own spiritual aspirations; why, then, sweet companion of the cloister, listen!

"Orphaned in infancy, I was left to the care of an old woman who made a slave of me. She was superstitious, kept body and soul together mostly by narcotics, was reputed to be a witch, and was of a truth a cruel woman. She ill-treated me, and I bore it until I was almost verging on womanhood;

though at sixteen I was as innocent and unsophisticated as a child of ten.

"Once when she had beaten me with more than usual severity I resolved that I would run away. A theatrical manager had induced the old woman to let me appear as an angel in the play of Faust at the local theatre. Soon afterwards a company of strolling players passed through the town. I followed them. In the darkness of that cruel time I can still see one sympathetic face looking at me with tearful eyes. I can still hear one gentle tender voice say 'good bye!'

"His name was Horace Durand. He was a boy, many years younger than I, and more highly placed in the little town where I was born. He had a happy home, a father and mother of great respectability, a future full of peaceful promise. He was not a playmate, but I had spoken to him, and for years I carried him in my sweetest recollections.

"By tortuous paths and devious ways I reached London. With some little experience gained under the canvass of a travelling

company of players, and after an illness in a strange lodging where they had left me to die, I began my career as an actress in a famous London theatre. My salary was fifteen shillings a week. I lived at Holloway, and, when I had paid the rent of my room and an occasional omnibus fare, I had nine shillings left for food and clothing. Now and then I had to suffer the pangs of hunger to save myself from the equally bitter pains of cold. I learned in those days how little we require. Warmth and food represented to me happiness. Would to heaven I had never desired more than these mere necessaries of life! If I had been a great artist, the consciousness of power, the belief in a future of ambitious success might have saved me. But the capacity to feel grand ideas and to sympathise with noble sentiments—these gifts of nature slumbered so long in my poor soul, that, when the one grand passion of all came to awaken the rest, it was too late, too late!

"That night I am going to tell you of a

'lady of the ballet' was sent to dress in my room. I had an apartment all to myself because it was so small that it was deemed impossible for two persons to use it at the same time. But my friend of the ballet was, for some reason connected with the re-building of the theatre, put into my cell. When I saw her fine underclothing, her silk hose, the lace on her petticoat, her satin corset, I was ashamed to make my toilet in her presence. She noticed it, and was so frank and generous that I liked her at once. 'You are ashamed of your clothes,' she said; 'you need not be.' I remember her exact words. 'You are a far prettier girl than I, and it is your own fault if you do not dress better than I do.' She took me by the shoulders and looked into my face. 'And positively you look hungry; you don't get enough to eat!' The tears came into my eyes. 'What do they pay you a week?' I told her. 'And you are trying to live upon that?' she asked. I said I did live upon it 'Why, my poor child,' she re-

plied, 'you are committing suicide! Have you a mother?' 'No.' 'Nor a father?' 'No.' 'A sweetheart?' 'No.' 'Then, why do you consent to starve? When I was your age I struggled for a whole month against poverty for the sake of my father and mother and the honour of their name. You are without an excuse.' Understanding from what she said that she was rich, I asked her what salary she received at the theatre. 'Nothing!' she said; 'nothing, and find myself! And yet I have the prettiest *bijou* brougham in town, a lovely house, half-a-dozen servants, and drink 'fizz' every day at luncheon!' I listened to her with wonder, with the kind of fascination we have in contemplating the graceful movements of a serpent or a tiger. She clasped a string of diamonds round my neck, and bade me look into the mirror on the wall. How they flashed! Between the acts a messenger brought into the little room a hot dish of sweetbread and a small bottle of wine. I had bought a pair of second-hand boots at a pawnshop that day,

in consequence of which extravagance I had been obliged to dine upon a penny roll. I was very hungry. If the ballet-woman had not invited me to eat, I think I must have begged for a mouthful.

"She insisted upon taking me home in her brougham. There was a bitter east wind. Poverty had never seemed so ugly to me as on that night. My landlady took the opportunity of abusing me the next day, for I owed her a fortnight's rent. 'Come gadding home in a swell's brougham, a disgracing my house!' she said, 'and then not pay my rent; if I *am* to have a fine madam of your sort in my house, at least let me be paid for the disgrace of it!' I went out and pawned all I had in the world and paid her. There is no stronger hand to drag a woman down to hell than a pawn-ticket, unless it is to be virtuous and to be discredited even when you are starving for honesty's sake. And oh, the cruel unfeeling city that bows and makes way for Vice in diamonds and tramples on Virtue in rags!

"The day came when a brougham waited at the stage-door for *me*; when *I* wore diamonds, and no longer went shivering to my rooms, cold and hungry. My pictures were bought by gentle, unsophisticated persons in country towns to adorn artistic albums. I had a house in Mayfair. I drove in the Park. My pair of ponies were famous. Ah! dear friend, turn away your head! Yes, take away your hand! I was toasted of men and envied of women. They hung my brazen face among pure and noble ladies on the Academy walls. That theatre in which I had dressed night after night to appear six or seven times and only to speak once; that theatre in which the acting manager used to swear at me if I was half an hour late; that theatre in which the manager insulted me when he first engaged me; that house of infamy where I had tried to earn an honest living became my own. It lighted all its lamps for me; it spread all its softest carpets for my feet; behind the scenes artists high and low exercised their pro-

foundest courtesies to please me. In front the audience flung its bouquets to me. Not that I was a great artist. I was not. Quite the contrary. But the leading artists of the Academy designed my dresses. The most famous French *modistes* made them. Fine ladies came to study the fashions at my theatre. Æsthetic artists sat in the stalls to gloat over the lissome graces of a woman's figure! Yes, sigh my poor friend, and regret you ever desired to know my story. Sit apart and cover your chaste eyes!

"Nay, pity the poor moth with its gold and crimson wings fluttering in the flashing lights of London! Ah! but you will pity me soon, my sister, and take me back into your arms again.

"An epidemic of fever fell upon the wealthy quarter of the town. It struck me through my barricades of gold. But all the medical skill of Vanity Fair bent itself to my rescue. I was nursed by Sisters of Mercy, and found solace in the administrations of a priest of our Holy Church.

When I was well enough I went abroad. On the dreamy shores of Lago-Maggiore I found myself apart from the world. Perfect rest was the prescription I had to carry out. Nobody must know of my retreat. I lived *incognito*, my name a new one; aye and my life a new one. I met him accidentally. I have told you his name. When I am dead it may be found engraven on my heart, for all my prayers, my vigils, my fasts, my penances will not obliterate it! Young, enthusiastic, a student, educated to love the noble and the true, to hate the false, the vulgar, and the mean. A face open as the day, an ambition of the loftiest, I loved him. For the first time I felt the passion I had toyed with; for the first time I could declaim the poet's lines that had fallen, with a hollow ring from a hollow heart, before audiences who had been content with the mockery because the mocker was tricked out in artistic robes, in a sensuous atmosphere of art and music. For the first time I understood Marguerite's woes and

Ophelia's tender words. For the first time my heart seemed to go out to the noble and the pure, the beautiful and the true, and I had tears instead of laughter for hearts that broke with love. Listen, sister, now, and pity me! I learnt to pray then. It was the inspiration of his deep, true eyes that raised my thoughts to heaven, that lifted my soul from the world's gutter, that showed me the hideous moth, its wings ragged and torn.

"Had I courage to let him see the creature I was? No. I had only just begun to live. His presence thrilled me. I hung upon the music of his voice. I wept for very joy. He often questioned me about the sadness he traced in my eyes. Now and then he talked of Paris and once of London. I mentioned to him the name of a French artist whose reputation was not good in the estimation of righteous people. He had never seen that vile woman he said, and he hoped he never might. He had not been in London since he was a boy. When

he left me that day I tried to think I, too, knew not that other woman, my other self; but conscience gripped my heart, and showed me myself. I prayed that it might turn out a dream; I flung myself on my face and lay prone for hours, praying that I might wake and find life just beginning, there and then, under the soft Italian skies, with Horace Durand, in the path that true love strews with flowers.

"I bent Fate to my own strong will. It seemed as if heaven itself had made a compromise with me—my love was so absorbing a passion, a blissfulness so all engrossing, pure to me and him as the limpid streams that trickled down the mountains in whose grateful shadows we sat letting the days slip by. And it came to pass that I did indeed forget myself, and who I was, and what I had been; it came to pass that I remembered nothing but that I loved and was beloved; and it must have been that some latent purity of thought and hope and faith that belonged to my childhood looked up at him

out of my false eyes, or he could never have poured out his very soul into my ears, and pictured me his wife, the partner of his joys and sorrows. After long days of sun and sweet perfumes, when the earth has lain in the arms of the hot and wooing sun, there come storm and tempest.

"It had been a bitterness in my cup of joy to learn that he had forgotten the poor little Constance of his boyish days, who now hung upon the honey of his lips; for I had remembered him the first hour I saw him as a man, and had experienced a new joy in recalling his childish tears, and his regretful good-bye in the hay-meadows by the green lane of the English valley far away. The shadow of the tempest fell upon my Italian dream in the shape of a visitor from London, who knew Horace and was his uncle's intimate friend. A hard just man, who blotted out my dream, laid waste my blissful hopes, devastated the harvest of a sweet summer, and left me once more a waif and stray of the world. O sister, touch me now! Let me

feel your arm around me! One moment let me lay my head upon your shoulder!

"'Judith Travers,' said the just man, 'this Horace Durand is the nephew of one who saved my life and honour; this Horace Durand is the hope and joy of my friend's declining years; I am here to break off his association with you. He does not know you; he thinks you a saint; when he learns who you are he will loathe you.' He was a just man but cruel; he addressed me as a judge might from his high seat; and he spoke this sentence against me. 'This,' he said, 'is what will happen should you resist my appeal to give him back to those who are his friends, and to the old man who is entitled to his respect and obedience. To-morrow, fortified with full details of your career, he shall stand before you and say, 'There is a man at Baveno who declares that he has an interest in the Regent Theatre; that he is here to take you back to London; that you are——'

"I heard no more. As he spoke I seemed

to see my love standing before me with pale face and flashing eyes. I fell before the cruel sentence as one dead, and when I awoke expected to find myself in purgatory. But Fridoline was by my side and Father Gabriello. They gave me restoratives; the dear father fortified me with wise advice; and I knew that my days in the world were over. 'Let us begone,' I said, 'I am content. It is enough that my soul has passed through the sweet pastures of a pure love; it is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all.' And it entered into my heart to feel that I was Constance Gardner once more, saying a good-bye again, in the which I found a new solace. Hush! Do you not hear those sweet sounds? They are other harps than Fridoline's, poor dear! I did not think to go before her, for she is old and I am young. Kiss me, sweet sister! Your chaste lips will find no Judith here, but only the persecuted maiden by the Scarsdale river, who has

found her everlasting rest in the loving arms of Mary."

And so passed away one, who, under more fortunate circumstances, might have been an angel upon earth, as well as an angel in heaven.

BOOK II.

"*And is this Yarrow?*—THIS *the stream*
Of which my fancy cherished
So faithfully, a waking dream?
An image that hath perished!
O that some minstrel's harp were near,
To utter notes of gladness,
And chase this silence from the air,
That fills my heart with sadness!"—

WORDSWORTH.

CHAPTER I.

THE HOUSE WHERE I WAS BORN.

I am standing by the house where I was born. The river is rolling between me and the well-known hills. The music of the mill-weir rises and falls upon the wind.

The first suggestions of spring are in the air, but winter hovers among the clouds. I have stolen away from London and from everybody, to wander about this old town of Scarsdale and to visit my father's tomb. I have had a busy time in many ways. I fancied this journey to Scarsdale as a combination of rest and duty.

How different my home-coming to that of the Ulysses whose adventures inspired my earliest dreams! No enemies are arrayed

against me; but the old home, where is it? As I stand here my heart seems to seek another resting-place. This is not my home; my somewhat scattered affections cling rather to "The Cedars" than to "Oakfield House." Sorrowful recollections overtop all that is joyful in my memories of Scarsdale. And nobody questions my right to be here. There is no fighting to be done. The truth is, I stand here and nobody knows me, and if they did what have I to battle for? Do I desire to be avenged on anybody? I did. But somehow for the moment the sweet reconciliation to my mother makes even the name of Welby no longer quite a red rag to my hate. For is not her name Welby? This thought sends my mind wandering away to Helen Dunstan and the Worcestershire valley. It goes, as it came, with a vague sense of past pleasures not properly appreciated nor understood.

I am standing, I repeat, by the house where I was born, and I fear me, I am, like an unkind critic at a new play, rather looking

for what is disagreeable than for that which is good and pleasant. I remember how the people of Scarsdale sneered at my French father; how the boys of Scarsdale persecuted me. Suddenly I think of Tommy Barnes, and he gives a prompt cue to my anger. I seem to see in him the representative of the entire crew of my boyish detractors. He is the concentration of all that is hateful to me in Scarsdale, and I remember that he once flung a stone at Connie Gardner; that he clapped his hands when Laudanum Nanny beat her; and that he was the villain of the true story with which I entertained my shipmates on board *The Phoebe*. Welby and Barnes stand before me in imagination as my bitterest foes, Barnes the worst of the two. I offer up what must, I fear, be a profane prayer that I may meet Tommy Barnes.

All this is weak, if not trivial; it strikes me so as I write it; but it is worth studying from a psychological point of view, as showing how real and lasting are the troubles, the hopes and fears, and the ani-

mosities of youth. Moreover the events which follow more or less justify this accentuation of that boy-ruffian Tommy Barnes. One would have thought that my great success (had I not been received with consideration even by Majesty itself?) would have been sufficient for me. Not at all. As I stand here once more, in my native place, I think of Tommy Barnes, and long to hold him by the throat and shake him out of his boots.

I glance furtively in at the windows of this house where I was born. It is all changed. The old square piano is gone. The flowers and the music-books, the quaint furniture, the violoncello by the fire-place; they are here no longer. I could not imagine my father sitting there caressing that old fiddle with such surroundings as those which now vulgarised the once pretty room. In the old days even a stranger, not called upon for any sentimental feelings in regard to home, contemplating the arrangement of colour might have felt the happier for a view of the parlour at Oakfield House.

While I stand recalling the past, with a regretful anger at the vulgarising of the dear old room, a troop of noisy children come bounding from the house. They stop however to stare at me. I ask them where they are going. To school they say. "To Dame Skinner's?" I ask. No; they have never heard of Dame Skinner. Do they know Tommy Barnes I wonder? No; but their father knows Lawyer Barnes. Oh, I say, and who is their father? The manager of Welby's factory they say, and then they scamper off.

I move away, going towards the river. Presently I cross the bridge leading to the factory, and I recall my first meeting with Connie Gardner, the persecuted grandchild of Laudanum Nanny. The mist rises as of yore upon the meeting of the waters. Looking down, I see what might be the self-same school of minnows and sticklebacks which I left disporting there when I was a boy. My imagination follows the course of the brook as it flows on to the sea. I associate the

career of Connie Gardner with it. I see her starting on her journey to the great ocean of oblivion, now struggling, now moving along in smooth places and calm weather, now contaminated by the great world in great cities, to slip away again into peaceful channels, and, finally, to disappear as an individuality in the great ocean, whither all our human barques are bound. I mix her up, I say, with this river of my youth, which flows through a wide country, at first a pure and lovely stream, fresh from the hand of God; then a work-a-day brook, turning mills; next forced to carry the unsavoury burdens of towns, the refuse of dye-works, the dregs of coal-washings; but, finally, to be quit of all its degradations in the broad and mighty ocean.

As I ponder thus by the river, a figure crosses the bridge. In imagination, I see my father with a child upon his shoulders, and presently the tolling of the passing bell falls upon my ear.

Scarsdale, which seemed so picturesque

when I was a boy, is a shabby town. I go to the inn where my uncle Grantley made me write down his address, and I find that it is as sycophantish as it is shabby. A party of tradesmen and others are smoking their pipes after their mid-day meal. They do not know me. I sit down among them. The conversation is political. It nearly always is in country taverns. They talk more politics and know more about politics in provincial cities than they do in London. Indeed they talk little else, and their partizanship is as strong as it was when their forefathers fought the battles of the Roses. Illustrative of the truth that there are exceptions to every rule, I find that the Right Hon. Jonas Welby, M.P., one of Her Majesty's Ministers, has literally bought Scarsdale body and soul. The chief employer of labour, he had instituted an organisation of charitable gifts of coals and blankets in winter, of tea and beer in summer. He headed all the local subscription lists for everything that could be subscribed

for, and he was continually *en evidence* as the chief patron and protector of the town. He paid for his membership of the House of Commons in this way. In London he was not known to spend a penny more than was necessary to maintain his town-house; but there his wife's name helped him, for she was indeed a benevolent woman, and in league with Miss Dunstan for good, patriotic, and truly charitable work. But these tradesmen at the Scarsdale inn are talking of little else than the noble qualities of their distinguished member, Mr. Welby. I can only endure this for a very short time. Just as I am about to leave a new-comer speaks of myself. He says the mayor of the town is calling a meeting to say something or do something about "this Horace Durand, who has discovered the new islands, and made so much noise in London." I hear this as if they are talking of some one else, and I go out into the streets, and set my face towards the churchyard where my father is lying. A plain slab gives the date of my first great

sorrow. "And is it so many years ago!" I cannot help exclaiming. "And am I that small boy who stood by an open grave on this spot and wept bitter tears into it?" Then I think what companions we should have been, he and I, if he had lived; how we should have read together and walked together; how he would have taught me the philosophy of Ulysses as well as the mere story; how he would have opened to me the world of French poesy and song; how he would indeed have been my master, guide, and friend; and how I should have dreamed dreams sitting by his side, while he inspired them with his eloquent 'cello.

As I stand ruminating in the churchyard, I note the long white road over the hills up which my fancy was wont to travel and lose itself in the old days; and on the other side of which was the palace my father told me of, that was more wonderful than anything Ulysses ever saw. It occurs to me that I will go and find that palace now, without guide or compass. I know that the palace

is Chatsworth, but I will go over the hills to it now my own way, and come upon it as if I was its discoverer; as if it might be the palace of some powerful monarch in a foreign land. The same inviting road still mounts the same hills that shut out of the wide world Oakfield House and its adjacent river in the days of my youth. It is not as white as it was; but this is not a summer-day, though the sun is shining.

I find the beginning of the long road. By-and-bye I pause near the spot where Connie Gardner said good-bye to me when she ran away.

CHAPTER II

A PRETENCE OF EXPLORATION THAT LEADS TO A REAL DISCOVERY.

Coming down from London by train to Scarsdale, I find at a bookstall a second-hand copy of Mr. Marvel's "Reveries of a Bachelor." It exactly suited my then frame of mind. Pausing here in the lane, now bare of leaves, which was so umbrageous and flowery in those early days, I try to understand my feelings in regard to Helen Dunstan, and in doing so sympathetically recall the chapter where the moralist lights his cigar with a wisp of paper. It does not burn so easily as at first—it wants warming before it will catch; but presently it is in a

broad full glow, that throws light into the corners of his room.

"Just so," he thinks, "the love of youth, which succeeds the crackling blaze of boyhood, makes a broader flame, though it may not be so easily kindled. A mere dainty step, or a soft blue eye, are not enough; but in her who has quickened the new blaze there is a blending of all these, with a certain sweetness of soul that finds expression in whatever feature or motion you look upon. Her charms steal over you gently, and most imperceptibly. You think that she is a pleasant companion—nothing more; and you find the opinion strongly confirmed day by day—so well confirmed, indeed, that you begin to wonder why it is that she is such a delightful companion. It cannot be her eyes, for you have seen eyes almost as pretty as Nelly's; nor can it be her mouth, though Nelly's mouth is certainly very sweet. And you keep studying what on earth it can be that makes you so earnest to be near her, or to listen to her voice. The study is pleasant.

You do not know any study that is more so; or which you accomplish with less mental fatigue. Upon a sudden some fine day, when the air is balmy, and the recollection of Nelly's voice and manner more balmy still, you wonder if you are in love!"

Now, while I am looking up and down this Scarsdale lane the air is not balmy. It is brisk and bracing, however, and the sun is shining, and I look back to the old days, and again my heart seems to wander away from the incident that used to touch me so nearly when I thought of it. As when standing opposite to Oakfield House I found my mind every now and then wandering off to "The Cedars," and the gentle Breedon country, so now did my fancy find its way into that same valley, with pleasant recollections of a certain September day, when the journalistic echoes of the guns at Sedan broke in upon an interesting *tête-à-tête* between two young people.

Was I in love with Helen Dunstan? Had the "crackling blaze of boyhood"

which lighted up the gardens of the Villa Verona been succeeded by "the broader flame" of manhood? I had not seen Helen for nearly a month, nor my mother either. Business in connection with the proposed expedition to Kututu; an urgent summons, from the owners of *The Phoebe*, to Bristol; a visit to the Hallams in Yorkshire; sundry interviews with Jeffrey Waller's solicitors; some claims on my time in connection with George Harmer's affairs; and other matters, had occupied my time. Meanwhile my mother had gone home, and Helen Dunstan with her. I had kept my mother informed of my doings generally, but I had said nothing of my intended visit to Scarsdale. My uncle had made no sign to me, nor I to him. We were both suffering from the ravages of a false pride, which neither Ernstone nor Hallam had been so far able to overcome.

With this pause for reflection, and also to acquaint you with a few necessary facts, I walk on. The road rises gently. Now and

then I get fine views of the surrounding country. I see the little town of Scarsdale at my feet. The river winds about it as if proud of the meadows, the factory, the streets, and the grey old tower of the parish church. It occurs to me that I almost wish Helen Dunstan could see the place where I was born. I pause to find in the distance the exact spot where Dame Skinner's school was. (Looking for it later in the street itself there was no sign of it; a grocery store and a new inn occupied the ground.) I try to find the site of it now from the high ground of the ascending road. There is no longer any revenge in my heart against the Dame.

So far as she is concerned my memory deals chiefly with the laburnums and lilacs that filled her garden, and nodded at the school-room window. I see her gay cap, and hear her prosing, and I smell her pork chops. Then Tommy Barnes rises up in the picture, and I hate him. He has unconsciously gathered up unto himself all my boyish animosities.

It is strange that it should be so; but it is. Then my memory goes off at a tangent to the forecastle of *The Phoebe*, and to the simple-minded brave fellows, who found real entertainment and delight in listening to the story of my first childish adventure.

The weather is not warm. I am hot nevertheless. I have been climbing this white highway during more than two hours. I arrive at a village. One would never have expected that there was such a halting-place as Stanhope when looking at the hills from Scarsdale. I enter the wayside inn, "The Rose and Crown," and refresh myself with a glass of ale.

"How far is it to the summit of these Scarsdale hills?" I ask.

"D'ye mean to the top?"

"Yes."

"Before you getten well started down into the valley t'other side?"

"Yes."

"Oh, a matter of two or three miles."

"Can you send a conveyance into Scars-

dale for my luggage, and give me a bed here to-night?"

"We've getten a spring cart as we can send; are you walking then?"

"Yes, a few miles."

This seems to excite doubt as to whether the spring cart is at liberty or not.

"I only arrived at the Angel last night; my bill cannot be much; here are five sovereigns; pay it, and also the charge for the cart, and give me the change later."

The landlady's opinion of me goes up at once, and there is much bustle of getting out the cart and horse, in the midst of which I go on my way. The country changes from meadows to moorland, from a pastoral highway to a rocky road. I meet lumbering carts and waggons. The drivers "pass the time of day" with me. They are earnest, healthy looking men. The road is hard with a February frost. I trudge along trying to feel that I am once more that boy in the velvet frock, but the effect is too great a tax upon the imagination. Somehow my thoughts

will wander to people and things that have no association whatever with Scarsdale or its surrounding country. I find myself thinking of Helen Dunstan, and the Worcestershire Valley, of my Uncle Grantley and "The Cedars." Since the Emperor gave up his sword at Sedan and thus broke in upon my *tête-à-tête* with Squire Dunstan's daughter, he has had to accept defeat at the hands of the grim conqueror of all, and the dear old capitalist on wheels has followed in his wake. Yet my mind goes back to the Worcestershire September, as if for the moment nothing had changed except myself. And I feel that I am greatly changed. Analysing the condition of my mind I come to the conclusion that I am drifting into love with Helen Dunstan, and I confess it with a sensation of quiet pleasure. It does not make my pulse beat, nor my temples throb, nor do I grow hot and cold at the thought of it. My feelings are twilight compared with noon; the soft calm tenderness of an English summer landscape with the reflection of the

sun left in the sky; and the peace of cooling shadows compared with the hot drowsy heat of noonday.

I plod on. Strange that the impulse to pick up one of the threads of my boyish life, and follow the clue of early fancies over the hills and far away, which set me exploring this white Derbyshire road, should become quite inoperative. I am on the highway which filled my imagination when a boy; but my thoughts are miles away. Even the joy of taking my dear little mother into my arms and feeling her kisses on my forehead, with tears in my own eyes, responsive to her sobs, awoke in me no striking remembrances of Scarsdale, except in the way of a pleasant domestic picture which was eventually smudged and blurred. I had come to associate my mother with Helen Dunstan, and Helen Dunstan carried me away to Worcestershire.

As I reach the summit of the range of hills, the point of my destination, it begins to snow. At the outset of my walk I mount

upwards, along the winding road, with a glimmering of the first desire of my boyhood to cross "those littler Alps one day, and see the grand palace," that was more wonderful than any of the palaces that existed in the days of Ulysses. We cannot revive the past. The old sensations are burnt out. We are apt to mistake the embers for real fire. Compensations come in new conditions of life, other emotions, other pleasures, toned down and softened by memories of the keener blissfulness and the sharper miseries of our youth.

Protected by an excavation of the rocky bank of the road, a wayside inn offers a picture of comfort and ease which is accentuated by the suggestion of snow in the air, and the deepening shadows of the winter afternoon. The landlord is at the door superintending the baiting of a pair of horses in a miller's waggon.

"What palace is that in the valley?" I ask.

"Palace!" says the landlord, "I know

of no palace in these parts except Chatsworth, and the Duke calls that a house, and it's a good five miles off."

"He calls it a house because it is a palace, as some people call their houses palaces though they are only houses, eh?"

"I am not good at conundrums, Mester," answered the landlord, "but my missus is, and, if you like to step into the bar, she'll may be wrastle with it."

As he spoke the wind blew upon the sign which swung over the doorway, and it creaked a sort of satirical approval of the landlord's not very original humour. I looked up. "The Dunstan Arms" in gold letters confronted me. I had been thinking of hardly anyone but Helen Dunstan for the past several hours, and as I looked upon the name of the inn it seemed as if the curious noise just referred to was now a croak of derision. "The Dunstan Arms!" As I repeated the words to myself, another gust of wind came along and made the sign fairly scream.

"You donnat seem to like the sign," said the landlord, eyeing me; "you're not the first as has objected to it."

"On the contrary, I like the sign," I said, "but it struck me as a little odd; it does not like the wind evidently."

"Nor more doant we, Mester; the wind that bangs that there sign about brings snow at this time of the year."

"Indeed!"

"Name hasna changed things in that respect; folk says as it is na lucky to change name o' the place. But the Denvers was never nowt to me, and Miss Dunstan has been kindest friend to me and my missus and the children we ever had; and I've paid her the only compliment as is in my power and that's 'The Doonstan Arms!'"

He pointed to the sign, and entered the house. I followed him, walking over a clean stone-rubbed and sanded passage into a bright, neat, shining bar-parlour. A blazing wood fire in a cosy ingle-nook; a counter full of flashing pewter cups and glasses; a

mahogany round-table polished so that you could see your face in it; a white-boarded floor with a great woolly rug on the hearth; several old mahogany chairs; on the walls half a dozen pictorial representations of hunting in Derbyshire; and on a window seat a few newspapers and *The Mayfair Magazine.* Such was the interior that mirrored itself in my mind. A rosy buxom woman of forty-five, in a white-spotted blue gown and white apron, and on her head a cap adorned with cherry-coloured ribbons; such was the landlady who bade me "Good day, sir!" as I entered.

"Mrs. Hunt, mester here wants to ax you some questions," said the landlord," and I'm going down to the hall to see Miss Dobbs, who wants me to look after some things as she's expecting fro' Lundun by the train at Bakewell; so my service to you, sir."

He nodded to me and went out.

"Miss Dobbs!" I exclaimed as he left the room, "and who is Miss Dobbs?"

"She's Miss Dunstan's companion and housekeeper in one, and there is not a kinder heart nor a keener tongue ever went together in this world than Providence has blessed Miss Dobbs with," said the landlady."

"That's true," I replied, remembring how she had called me a fool on that long-past September years ago.

"You know her?"

"I think so."

"Then you know a woman of a thousand."

"But what is she doing here?"

"Everything," said Mrs. Hunt, "everything, if you ask me."

"She lives in the neighbourhood, then?"

"I should think the did when she is here."

"Yes, that seems likely enough," I replied, adding the question "then she is not always here?"

"No, she's sometimes in London."

I suspect the fact that I did not at once

make inquiries about Miss Dunstan is another illustration of my growing love for her. There is a page in Mr. Marvel's book, marked to this day and the leaf turned down, as I marked it in the railway carriage, on my way to Scarsdale. I think it greatly influenced my feelings at this time and encouraged me in coming to a conclusion about them; and I shall hope to refer to it presently *apropos* of my conduct in this present chapter.

"Sometimes in London," I said, taking a seat near the window, and picking up *The Mayfair Magazine*.

It was the copy which contained my article on the Boulonagans and Kututu, relating my adventures there, and entering into proposals for the equipment of a relief and search expedition.

"She gave me that book," said the landlady.

"Indeed," I said, not without a slight sensation of the pride of authorship.

"It contains a report of the doings of a friend of theirs, Mr. Durand, the exploring gentleman," she replied.

"Report" was hardly the right word to apply to my essay, I thought, but Mrs. Hunt was a reader of newspapers, and the district reporter of *The Scarsdale Times* often called at the Dunstan Arms on his journeys between the head office and Bakewell. He spoke of everything as a report, and Mrs. Hunt had a great respect for him. I had a glimmering of the true situation of affairs in regard to Miss Dobbs, for I suddenly remembered that Ernstone had told me in a letter that Miss Dunstan had bought an estate not far from Scarsdale; but I felt like a boy with a packet of sweetmeats, who wishes to make it last as long as is compatible with continual tasting. In order to propitiate the landlady, therefore, I ordered a pint of madeira (she said her master had a special tap of madeira which she was sure I should like), and lighted a cigar.

Had Ernstone been present he would have regarded it as sinful to smoke with such wine; but I was alone, and I had a fancy, in remembrance of Mr. Marvel's delicious reveries, to light my cigar "with a wisp of paper."

"A friend of theirs?" I said, echoing her, with an emphasis on the word theirs.

"I mean her and Miss Dunstan," said the landlady placing the wine before me.

"Rather an odd person this Mr. Durand, I should think," said I, not with my usual ingenuousness.

"Odd! he's one of the bravest men that ever lived," she answered.

"Shouldn't have thought so by his own report in this magazine."

"Oh, but that's his modesty. He's made a deal more of that carpenter and Dick Smith and the Irish king than there was any need."

"Really!"

"A sight more! Why he'd seen no end o' troubles and adventures, even before the

shipwreck as well as after, that he never mentions; though there was a man here yesterday, as says he knows a man as might be better called Euylsis than him as a matter of mere travelling, though not as regards being cast on a highland of man-eaters."

"I quite agree with him," said I.

"Do you?" said she, "you'd better not let Miss Dobbs hear you say so."

"Why?"

"I told her this morning what the man said, and she called him a fool."

"Did she though?" said I, "she appears to use pretty strong language."

"Yes, she does," said the landlady; "but there are some folk who make a show of being hard for sake of hiding a soft heart, without which defence they would be imposed on continually."

A sound observation, the philosophy of which was original on Mrs. Hunt's lips; for she could never have read Goldsmith's "Gentleman in Black."

The claims of some other part of the

house took the landlady away for a few minutes. She left me lost in wonder and perplexity. "Can it be," I said to myself, "that the palace I am in search of is the Derbyshire home of Helen Dunstan?"

CHAPTER III.

I CONDESCEND TO ENGAGE IN A VULGAR BRAWL.

So soon as Mrs. Hunt returned I ventured to put my inquiring thought into a question.

"And Miss Dunstan?" I said, "is she then the owner of the palace below the hill yonder?"

"Derwent Hall? Yes," she replied, "and you may well call it a palace, for except Chatsworth I know nowt as beautiful, not being what folks call a show place. But eh, how it's improved since Miss Dunstan bought it!"

"Is it?"

"That it is indeed. It's a palace com-

pared with a dog-hole since the Denvers left it and she took it."

"They were mean people, the Denvers, eh?"

"Mean! Lord, lord, I should think they were. But they had no money, heaven forgive them, and a spendthrift son."

"Then they were to be pitied."

"That's what folk said when my mester changed our sign from Denvers Arms to Dunstan Arms. They said it was worshipping the rising sun. And John Thomas, my mester, says the sun's nowt to do with it; ansom is as ansom does, he says, and no more Denvers for me, he says."

"Which I don't call very polite," said a young man, who stepped into the bar accompanied by an old shabby-looking bashful kind of man, "not to say ungrateful; but it's my delight on a shiny night, ain't it, Sammy?"

"So you says," responded the shabby man, shambling into a seat by the fire.

"Mrs. Unt, mam," said the younger of the two new comers, "two 'ot hales with plenty o' ginger, and I shall want a bed to-night."

"Yes, Mr. Barnes, by all means," answered the landlady; "but let me advise you, if my mester comes in, not to speak about the Denvers and the Dunstan Arms, 'cos he doesn't like you, and he's inclined to cut up rough about it lately."

"Oh, is he? very well, he'd better not cut up rough with me because there's sich a thing as law, Mrs. Unt, and it's my delight on a shiny night, aint it, Sammy?"

"You says so," replied Sammy, rubbing his hands, not with satisfaction but with cold.

I took an immediate and strong antipathy to Mr. Barnes. He was a horsey-looking young man of about my own age. He was pale, with short brown whiskers closely cropped, tall, with a dark cut-away coat and tight-fitting light brown trousers. When he

entered the room he took off a heavy overcoat and laid it upon a chair. He wore a light neckerchief with a horse-shoe scarf-pin stuck in it. His hat was a short beaver, very prominently turned up at the sides. He slapped his legs with a stumpy riding-whip. His eyes were light and restless; his eyebrows were light and straggly; his nose was long and shapeless, his mouth hard and cruel.

"Oh, you've got this piece of 'umbug here, have you?" he exclaimed, taking up *The Mayfair Magazine*, "it's all over Scarsdale, and the Corporation are going to call a meeting about it."

"Indeed, are they, what for?"

"To pass a resolution to invite the beggar to a banquet. He was born at Scarsdale, you know."

"Yes, I have understood so."

"A reg'lar ound!" said the stranger; "I know'd him when I was a lad; Frenchy we used to call him; I got him turned out of old Mother Skinner's school, the mongrel!"

"Did you now, and I suppose you think that is something to be proud of?"

"Right you are, Mrs. Unt, for it's my delight on a shiny night, and I wish it wasn't after sundown, eh, Sammy?"

"So you says," answered Sammy.

"But we must wait till the morning, eh, Sammy? We are up to larks, we are, Mrs. Unt! You wait; eh, Sammy?"

"Lor, how you goes on," answered Sammy.

"Mrs. Unt, I'm regular enjoying myself just now. It's as good as a play. That Miss Dobbs she called at our office this week about a little matter of business, and she says, when it was over, 'Mr. Thomas Barnes,' she says, 'you are a Hidiot——'"

"Idiot, I think the lady would have said if it is the Miss Dobbs I have the honour of knowing," I said, turning towards the group, with my fingers itching to take the fellow by the throat, for all in a moment I spotted the enemy of my boyhood, and my very soul

rose against him as if he embodied the cause of all my boyish grief.

"Well, I said Hidiot!" he replied, "and I wasn't talking to you."

"You were speaking of friends of mine," I said, rising, "and I am going to make you apologise."

"Oh, indeed!" he said, grasping his whip.

"Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Hunt," I said, "he will apologise, and on his knees."

"Will I?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," I said, "go down upon your knees and say, I humbly beg pardon of all here for disrespectfully mentioning the name of Mr. Horace Durand, and I confess myself a coward for having done so."

"I'll see you hanged first, Mister," he said, squaring his shoulders and half-raising his whip as I stepped towards him.

My desire was to induce him to strike me, that I might wipe out some of those old sufferings which I had endured when a boy at the hands of himself and others,

suffering which I felt then as bitterly as if I were a boy again in a velvet frock, scoffed at and hooted and tauntingly called "Frenchy." How deeply the animosities and the injustice of boyhood sink into the heart!

I touched him on the collar.

"That's an assault!" he said, stepping back; "I'm a lawyer's articled clerk, my father is the junior partner in the firm of Short and Barnes, and I call you, Samuel Mercer, and you, Mrs. Unt, to witness that he struck the first blow."

During all the time that he was speaking he was preparing to hit me with his whip.

Mrs. Hunt ran out of the room, evidently to call assistance.

"Down on your knees!" I said.

He raised his cudgel above his head. As he did so, I struck him full in the face with my right hand, landing him one with my left, under his right jaw, as he fell. The old man shambled towards me. "Stand aside!" I said, "I have no quarrel with you," and I

thrust him back into his seat as my ancient foe, his face all bloody, gathered himself together, and came at me with a pewter pot. I caught him by the wrist, twisted the weapon out of his hand, and hit him again. I felt as if I could kill him. "Murder! Mercy!" he screamed. I took him by the throat and forced him upon his knees. "Beg Horace Durand's pardon!" I said, "or I will shake the life out of you."

"I do, I do!" he gasped.

"Confess yourself a cowardly sneak!" I said.

"I do! oh, mercy, I do."

Mrs. Hunt, her husband, and the ostler appeared on the scene at the moment.

"I told you he would apologise, Mrs. Hunt." I said, "and I must now apologise to you for making a scene."

"And a nice mess too, mister!" said the landlord surveying the disordered room, and the red marks of the fight, "for which I don't thank you, I can tell you!"

"It was not the gentleman's fault at all,"

said the landlady, "Mr. Barnes brought it all on himself."

"I'm dying!" gasped Barnes, "go for a constable and a magistrate."

"Constable and magistrate!" exclaimed the landlord taking him by the collar and lifting him up, "come here and wash your face."

"What's his name, who is he?" he asked, standing up and leaning against the landlord; "I'll have a warrant out against him."

"I am a friend of Mr. Durand and Miss Dobbs," I said, "and am staying at 'The Rose and Crown' yonder. Mrs. Hunt, let me pay you for polluting your clean and wholesome parlour with unpleasant reminiscences of this creature. I cannot pay you for the pleasure it has afforded me to teach him a lesson in civility."

I slipped three sovereigns into her hand, buttoned my coat tightly across my chest, took up my stick, and walked away.

"And this comes of eaves-dropping," I said as I strode out down the road for the

"Crown," five good miles away, and after sunset. "Listeners hear no good of themselves," I said, "is not always true, but I am glad he had nothing good to say of me. I never felt so happy in my life!" I could not help talking to myself aloud as I walked. Mrs. Hunt's madeira was fine liquor. It had done me a world of good. "Horace, my boy," I said, as I bounded along (it was much easier going down hill than up), "you are indeed a lucky fellow! A kind providence directed your steps to 'The Dunstan Arms!'" Heaven forgive me, I felt as if I was hitting my step-father too when I was smiting Tommy Barnes! The wind came rollicking up the hill as I rattled along. I felt my face burning under its pleasant friction. There were sharp bits of snow in the air.

"And Helen Dunstan lives yonder in the palace over the hills!" I said; "what a wonderful discovery! Talk of Kututu, Derwent Hall beats it altogether. To think that I should have dreamed of that palace over

the hills as a boy—to find it, when I am a man, with Helen Dunstan in it!"

"Hurrah!" the wind seemed to cry, coming along and shouting away up the hill where the last glimmer of the lights at "The Dunstan Arms" had faded out. The moon was there instead—white and shining, high up in a luminous sky. A carriage and pair of horses came steaming up hill, with lamps and cracking whip. "Good night!" said the driver, as I stood aside to let him pass. "Good night," I answered, "and God bless you!"

"Same to you!" shouted the driver. "Ah! ah!" the wind seemed to cry.

"And God bless everybody for that matter," I said, and I thought I heard in response, "You're another, whatever it is!"

I was very merry, and set off to run for very joy. By-and-by the lights of "The Rose and Crown" greeted me in the valley. I paused to rest awhile, and to make some calmer reflections upon what had occurred. The moon appeared to be racing along as if

to overtake me. A few fleecy clouds accompanied it. One or two stars twinkled overhead. The wind whistled as it does at sea. Great stretches of rocky boulders, lying among beds of heather, stretched away on either hand. The road was hard and white—that same dear highway upon which my boyish fancy was wont to travel in years gone by! This may seem trivial to you, my friends; but oh! the delight of it all to me!

CHAPTER IV.

A BUNDLE OF LETTERS.

"The Rose and Crown" was full of light, and busy with tokens of hospitality and comfort. My luggage had arrived, and I appeared to be in high repute. I was shown to a bedroom with a blazing fire upon the hearth. My portmanteau had been carried upstairs. The one private parlour of the house had been made ready for me. The shutters were tightly closed, and the room made snug. It is possible that a packet of letters which had arrived for me at the Scarsdale Hotel, and which "The Rose and Crown" man had brought with my luggage, had inspired these special attentions.

I ordered supper, and I ate it with infinite relish. Afterwards I went into the bar-parlour and sat by the fire. It was nine o'clock. A few travellers by road to Scarsdale came in to warm themselves and chat. They warmed themselves inside and out. Hot rum and water was their favourite drink. Some of them had a teaspoonful of honey added. They talked chiefly of the weather. One of them said there had been a row and a fight at "The Dunstan Arms." The landlord of "The Rose and Crown" was deeply interested in this piece of news. It entertained me somewhat, especially when I learned that "a stuck-up nowt" from Scarsdale, "horsey Barnes, the lawyer chap," had got the worst of it. At the same time the consciousness that I had been engaged in a vulgar brawl, and almost on the very threshold of Helen Dunstan's house, brought a flush to my cheeks that was not pride. When the narrator said "chap as had leathered horsey Barnes said as he was stopping at 'Rose and Crown,'" the land-

lord promptly denied it, and, as it seemed to me, for the purpose of propitiating me with the idea of the great respectability of his house. I made a remark now and then and went on smoking my cigar, until the last traveller appeared to have gone on his way; and then I said good-night and was shown to my bedroom.

Here I found, upon a chest of drawers with my dressing-bag, that same packet of letters to which I have referred. They had been dispatched from my hotel in London, according to my instructions, to Scarsdale. I had left orders that this address should be given to no one, but that any person calling should be informed that I would be back in town very shortly, and that in the meantime any cards or letters would be sent on to me. I found in the packet which had been forwarded to me at Scarsdale several epistles of great interest. The first to attract my attention was, from whom do you think? My uncle. I could not believe it until I had

twice turned to the signature and the once familiar address. It ran as follows:—

"You Ungrateful Vagabond,—

"I conclude by your silence that it "is not your intention to ask my forgiveness "for having turned you out of my house "(though not out of my heart, as you "thought, on that cold autumn night, a "hundred years ago as it seems to me); and "therefore, taking a leaf out of the Book "of Job, I commit myself to this piece of "humiliation and patience.

"I request that you will come home. "Yes, sir, home; and, seeing that you are "now independent of me and are a great "man, so Ernstone, and even my lord judge "Miller (only think of Miller sitting on the "Bench and hanging folk) say, I make this "a request and not an invitation. I request "you, mark me, to come home; in the same "way that if you were poor I should invite "you, and pray you not any longer to "punish your doating old fool of an uncle "by keeping away from 'The Cedars.'

"Five years ago I would not have con-"fessed that anything you or anybody "might do could induce me to sacrifice one

" jot of the Grantley pride; but I grow old
" and somewhat feeble, and I have no ties
" of blood nor affection about me, and I think
" I did you a wrong; yes, I think I did;
" though damme where you got the Grantley
" pride from to resent it and stand by your
" resentment I do not know—not from your
" mother, that's certain, for a more gentle
" bending creature does not live.

"But you are a hard-hearted specimen
" of the Grantley pride, Horace, to keep it
" up so long, when, confound you, you
" ought to know that I am not at heart the
" tyrannical old dog I appeared to be that
" one night. I thought you would have
" been back again the next day, and I and
" Sandy almost came to blows because he,
" with his infernal Scotch impudence (and
" wisdom, the blackguard), said you'd never
" come back till I begged your pardon.
" Dick Grantley beg his nephew's pardon
" for having failed to make a gentleman of
" him, I said, was a good joke, and I ordered
" Sandy to beg mine for proposing such an
" insult; and—would you believe it?—the
" pig-headed porridge-eating varlet defied me,
" and offered to leave my service that minute,
" saying that my temper was unbearable,

" and that if a stripling like Master Horace
" could bang my bit of money down, and
" quit without a sixpence, he had come to
" the conclusion that he could do the same.
" A mutiny all round you see, a wicked
" mutiny with you as the chief, and you
" will understand what a time this blether-
" headed Scot has led me. He was always
" a saucy upstart from the first day I took
" him into my service, five-and-thirty years
" ago, and age has not improved him, though
" I am not the master to turn a God-forsaken
" creature like Sandy out upon the world,
" as you will well believe I feel assured.

" Colonel Ernstone has done my heart
" good by his account of your meeting with
" your mother and Miss Dunstan at Antwerp,
" and I have had the honour of a visit from
" Mr. Justice Miller, who says you are a fine
" fellow, but that he thinks you will never
" forgive him for some slight exaggeration
" which he says he put into a statement he
" made to you in Italy. Miller is a wonder-
" ful man, and his wife, a lady in her own
" right, doats upon him. Old Burton had a
" good knowledge of the sex, Horace, eh?
" you argumentative scoundrel! Be good
" enough to consider that I am shaking my

" fist at you; and that Sandy is chuckling
" over your having the best of the controversy
" while he is pretending to be decanting a
" bottle of that old Madeira which is more
" than five years better than it was when
" you last tasted it.

" I don't think I ever wrote a letter in
" my life a tenth as long as this, and yet
" confound the whole business if I know
" when to leave off, and I have so much to
" say that I feel as if I had only just begun.
" It is entirely of my own free will that I
" send you this; for even Ernstone has
" given over prodding me on to doing some-
" thing, and I have long since forbidden
" Sandy to mention your name, though the
" mutinous scoundrel fills my table with con-
" founded newspapers that are full of it.
" Come home, my boy, and forgive your
" domineering old uncle, who never yet
" offered such a plea to man or woman in
" this wide world, and hopes never again to
" entitle anybody to expect it; though
" Sandy, in the row I told you of, had the
" audacity to say that I was worthy to be
" one of the two Babes-in-the-wood uncles
" for what I had done to you. I believe I
" rather liked him for calling me names,

"because he was standing up for you—you
"aggravating, stubborn, good-for-nothing,
"dear old chap after my own heart.

"In conclusion let me say that if you
"expect me to confess any more than this
"that I was in the wrong, you can stay
"where you are wherever that may be, for
"nobody seems to know, and Sandy says
"you have maybe gone to sea again.
"It will not be necessary for you to
"tell Ernstone, or Miller, or anybody else,
"that I have written you this letter; but
"just come right away and we will forget
"what we cannot remedy. I believe I am
"more like an old woman than the 'starchy
"Dick Grantley' you have heard of. I am
"looking for your coming as if (had I ever
"been worthy of such a blessing) you were
"my own son instead of a mere gasconading
"nephew who does not care a brass farthing
"(and serves me right) for his tyrannical
"but repentant old uncle,

"Richard Grantley."

I need not say how sincere was my delight and satisfaction at the receipt of this characteristic epistle. The next letter in the bundle was from the victim of Circe.

"My generous Friend and Benefactor," it began; and after some over-wrought compliments it went on as follows:—

"I had the honour to call upon you, my "mother accompanying me, with the hope "that we should have the opportunity to "thank you in person for all your kindness, "and at the same time that we might wish "you good-bye, as we are going together to "America, where I have a prospect of good "employment, and in which country I shall "endeavour in some measure to retrieve the "past, solaced and encouraged by my "mother, who has made many sacrifices in "my interest and for my welfare. She has, "by dint of much self-denial, saved several "thousand pounds, and I am urged by an "artistic friend to believe that I shall find a "good field in the cities of New York, "Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington for "decorative art, as he is convinced that "America, being rich, is now seeking the "lasting pleasure and satisfaction that is to "be enjoyed in an appreciative contempla-"tion of that which is beautiful in form and "colour, and the worship of which is now all "that is left to me, and I thank Heaven for

" leaving in my heart a germ of that old " love of Art which is now to give me rest, " employment, profit, all in one, and to " prove a purifier of the baser Nature that " has hitherto pinned me to the earth and to " the mire thereof.

" Forgive me for writing in this strain; " it is done out of my desire to explain to " you my hopes, and to show to you my " plans, that you may feel you have not " helped me in vain. My mother wishes me " to add her thanks to my own, and asks me " to entreat you to think well of her and not " according to report, but to believe that she " was devoted to Sœur Constance and in all " things served her faithfully. 'Tell him,' " she says, 'with the wreath I have laid " upon her grave I leave one-half my heart " to live out the remainder with my son, " whose salvation under God I owe to him " (Mr. Horace Durand), to whom I can never " be sufficiently grateful.'

" And now, Sir, good-bye: we say it " together, me and my mother; and we pray " that you will be rewarded here and here- " after for your goodness to both of us, and, " if ever you should desire to communicate " with us, a letter addressed to the care of

" the Guion Line Company, New York, will " find me, as I shall arrange with that " Steamship Company to keep my address " and forward any letter, in the hope that " one day I may hear from you, my dear " Sir and only friend in England.

" Your obedient, faithful Servant,

" GEORGE HARMER."

A third letter ran as follows :—

" My dear Horace,

" Striking tents and moving off—the " deuce knows whither, and without noti- " fication to your principal ally, is, in the " language of the streets, ' a rum go.' Is " it a Sulu beauty, or ' a little French mil- " liner ' ? Or is it Jeffrey Waller? A " secret *amour*, or a mysterious commission? " I hope the cabby's order was not—' To " Manilla.'

" ' Back in a few days, and cards or " letters will be forwarded,' the hotel porter " says, and, if I were not the mildest- " mannered fellow that ever cut a throat or " picked a pocket, I should tell you to go to " the deuce as an ill-mannered son of a gun, " and leave you to your fate. But I con-

" clude you are obeying some behest of " Love or Pluto, or both, and so, for auld " lang syne, I forego the right to be angry.

" Wherever you are you see the papers " of course, and the question about Kututu " and the Boulonagans in the Commons last " night will not have escaped you. The " Secretary for the Colonies appears to be in " a fog as to the possible latitude of the new " countries. This is not to be wondered at " when he stumbled in his geography over " a question as to Sabah and Sulu. The " Right Hon. Jonas Welby, I am told, is " anything but pleased at the frequent " mention of your name in the public " journals, and your uncle (with whom I " have been spending two days) tells me " that the probability of your marrying " Miss Dunstan is gall and wormwood to " him. Dick Grantley is more worldly wise " than some people think, and I have this " day received a hint which leads me to " believe he is right when he thinks that " there is more in this than belongs to " dislike of his step-son.

" Miss Dunstan's lawyers in London are " also Mr. Welby's solicitors. During the " last two years there have been several

" suits in respect of a Joint Stock Mining " Company in which Mr. Welby had induced " Miss Dunstan to invest a very large sum " of money. The Breedon lawyers, who at " one time conducted all the Dunstan " business, are sore at the treatment they " have received. They attribute the change " to Welby. I met one of the firm in " London to-day. He told me in confidence " that Welby has contrived to unload most " of his responsibility in the mining suits " upon Miss Dunstan, and that a warrant of " execution has gone down to Scarsdale in " respect of Miss Dunstan's Derbyshire " estate.

" This is strange news and ill news, and " I have determined to make a rapid march " of investigation upon Derwent Hall, where " I may fix my head-quarters for some days, " or return to town at once, according to " the march of events.

" Know therefore, my mysterious friend, " that, if you do not find me at my chambers " in London, I am to be heard of at Der- " went Hall, near Scarsdale, Derbyshire.

" Yours indignantly to command,

" Tom Ernstone."

I pondered over these letters far into the night; and when I had, as it were, relighted my cigar "with a wisp of paper," after the manner of my literary friend of "The Reveries," it seemed as if there was sweetness instead of bitter in the possibility of Miss Dunstan losing her property. I cannot help thinking that her wealth was a stumbling block to me, in those days when my uncle Grantley expected it to act as a loadstone to my affections. Latterly her possessions of gold and lands had not occurred to me in connection with the possibilities that were growing out of the renewal of our friendship. Now, I could not help feeling that if she were penniless to-morrow I would go straightway to her and offer her my hand and heart. "But," asks my friend the moralist, "can a heart once lit be lighted again?" Mr. Marvel argues that it can; but there is something like special pleading in his summing-up; so much so, that, had the question been adjudicated upon in favour of his theory, a new trial might have been

granted on the plea of "mis-direction" of the jury in the judge's address. There is another philosopher who does not beat about the bush, nor give undue colour to the evidence upon which he charges the men in the box. Mr. Thackeray, discoursing of "Love and Marriage," contends that it is desirable for a man to be in love several times. He declares that if a man loses the object of his first passion the loss in no instance has been known to kill. "If you win her," he says, "it is possible that you will be disappointed. But, hit or miss, good luck or bad," he would be sorry that any young fellow should not undergo the malady which first struck me down under the blue skies of Italy. "Every man ought to be in love a few times in his life, and to have a smart attack of the fever. You are the better for it when it is over; the better for your misfortune if you endure it with a manly heart; how much the better for success if you win it and a good wife into the bargain!" And you will remember that

the contented citizen into whose mouth Thackeray put these words had been married twice, and—who knows?—may have had almost a polygamous hope of lighting his cigar with a new match.

My thoughts rambled on over this broad field of sentiment and common sense. If I had been a poet I fear I should have degraded my muse with a prosaic record of an earthy world. Money, common sense, love, expediency, philosophy,—it seemed as if I had re-lighted my cigar with a wisp of paper that had done duty as the leaf of a ledger in a huckster's shop. It must have been the vulgar taint of Ernstone's reference to a warrant of distress being issued against Miss Dunstan's property. Fancy a dirty "man in possession" of the palace which I had discovered lying at the foot of those romantic hills that had been the wonderland of my youthful imagination, and had cast a glamour of poetry over the fancies of my manhood! Is it surprising that my thoughts for the moment groveled in the mire of a

conventional existence with debts and duns in it?

The firelight that has been playing upon the old-fashioned bed-chamber has gone out. There is only a glow of embers in the grate. I turn from reminiscences of Thackeray to Ik Marvel, and remember that he of the "Reveries" died a bachelor after all. He lingered too long in the sunny glances of Nelly's soft blue eyes. One morning she disappeared, and years afterwards she met him a comely matronly dame, and presented him to her gallant husband and their two little boys. They all dined together. "It is very jovial at table; for good wine, I find, is a great strengthener of the bachelor heart. But afterwards, when night has fairly set in, and the blaze of the fire goes flickering over your lonely quarters, you heave a deep sigh!" And Nelly was his second experience! There was a Louise before her. I think to myself, "Helen is, in truth, my first and second experience, and I will make Ernstone, my uncle, and my mother happy

by rendering such chances as those suggested by the bachelor-moralist impossible."

I am endeavouring to record my thoughts faithfully, even at the risk of presenting myself in an unfavourable light to my lady friends, who may think that in these last reflections my heart does not respond with a sufficient warmth of gratitude to the love of Helen Dunstan, and which, it may also be said, I count upon too confidently. Nevertheless, I feel certain as I sit pondering over the embers of this winter fire, away among the Derbyshire hills, that should Miss Dunstan become Mrs. Horace Durand she will have a faithful, true, and devoted husband.

CHAPTER V.

"THE PALACE THAT WAS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN ANYTHING ULYSSES EVER SAW."

There had been a thaw during the night. The next morning, when I started to drive from "The Rose and Crown" to "The Dunstan Arms," it was spring. It is true the snow lingered here and there in white patches, but the sun was shining high up in the heavens, and the birds were singing in the hedgerows round about the roadside inn. The air was mild, and there was a smell of newly-turned earth in it. It was as if the dear old world had just awakened from a long sleep. The horse in "The Rose and Crown" gig neighed triumphantly as the

landlord cracked his whip. A lark was carolling in the clear sky above us.

As we sped along the road, the doors of wayside cottages were open to let in the first breezes of spring. One or two window-sills were yellow with crocuses in pots. Men were at work in their little gardens; labourers were pruning the hedges; rooks were busy in the tall elms; and when we came to the moorland it seemed to stretch far away like a dark carpet that had been spread for the clouds to make flitting shadows upon it.

I left my charioteer at "The Dunstan Arms," and walked down the hill towards that palace in the valley. Do you know Derbyshire? It is full of "dales." This was one of them into which I was penetrating. As I went down hill, a velvety slope, with jutting rocks and trees, gradually arose in front of me. I don't know how many "dales" there are in Derbyshire, but they are very numerous. Monsall Dale, Miller's Dale, Darley Dale, Dove Dale, and a score

of others occur to me. I have studied the rural mysteries of most of them; but this was my first excursion into the valley, where Derwent Hall nestles among the oaks and elms, the birch and firs, of one of the most sweet and peaceful bits of landscape it is possible to imagine.

The road was fringed with alternating wood and meadow, with now and then a deep lane that finished in a nutty-looking copse suggestive of summer rambles and autumn harvests. A dry-stone wall marked the boundary on either side of me, the interstices filled with lichens and mosses, and in the bank below I felt that there were violets and primroses ready to shoot up through the fallen leaves so soon as the sun should give them sufficient encouragement. I thought of them as typical of the bright hopes of men which had been long buried under desolating winters of disappointment. Presently I came to a toll-gate, where the ruddy-faced 'pike-man was leaning over the half-door, smoking, and unconsciously taking in the gentle in-

fluences of the spring morning. A numerous company of barn-yard fowls and pigeons were briskly investigating a quantity of wheat which the 'pikeman's wife was distributing among them in the road. The chief chanticleer of the party paused as I passed by to utter a general challenge of mortal combat to all creation; and the sun blazed out as if it endorsed the loud defiance. "A fine morning," said the smoker, taking his pipe out of his mouth.

"It is indeed," I said, and the entire country now opening up at my feet seemed to smile. It was as if Nature had just flung wide open all the shutters of her house, and said "the night is over, and the summer-time is at hand." A trout-stream came laughing round a bend of the valley, as if it had burst out of the rocky sides of the dale; and as I traced its course my eyes fell upon the towers of Derwent Hall, reflected, with their surrounding trees, in the river which here spread itself almost into a lake, as if for the purpose of acting as a mirror to the scene.

As I walked on, I came to the lodge-gates; and, being admitted, found myself traversing a long level roadway with park-like grounds on either hand, until at length the landscape opened right and left, with wide, sweeping lawns in front of me, and Derwent Hall looking down upon me out of many diamond-paned windows. The doors of the porch-like entrance were wide open, and, as I approached, a carriage with a pair of ponies came out from a roadway through a clump of trees on the right, and pulled up, to the evident delight of a fine Newfoundland dog that welcomed them with joyous barks and bounds. Before I had time to speak to the servant, who now came to the door, I found myself in presence of the lady of the hall. A blush, betokening either surprise or pleasure, suffused her lovely face. I think it was something more than astonishment that sparkled in her eyes; for I saw her before she saw me, and noted the calm that was in her face, the absence at the moment of active thought or feeling.

The light that passed into it—the sunshine, I am vain enough to say, went straight to my heart, eliciting responsive emotions.

"My dear Mr. Durand!" exclaimed Miss Dunstan, "I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you!"

I pressed her gloved hand, but said nothing for a moment.

"Thank you very much," I stammered.

She looked almost oppressively handsome—this Diana of my boyhood, a picture of English health and beauty set in a framework of manorial hall, and oaks, and velvet lawns. A Newmarket coat of myrtle-green plush, trimmed with sable; a short skirt of plaited satin; a small toke or hat of the same material as the jacket; a pair of gauntlets or driving-gloves; the rich yet simple fashion and colour of her attire set off her singularly neat clean-cut style of beauty.

"Surely, something wonderful is in the wind!" she said; "Colonel Ernstone arrived only half an hour ago, quite unexpectedly, and on business he said, and I am just now

going to the Bakewell Station to meet your mother."

"It never rains but it pours," I replied.

"Will you accompany me to the station, or go inside and find the Colonel?" she asked.

"I will go with you certainly, if I may."

"John," she said to the servant, who stood by the horses' heads, "put Normandy into the dog-cart, drive to the station, and bring Mrs. Welby's luggage. I will drive Mr. Durand."

"Yes, Miss," said the servant, as the lady of the manor signified that I should take my seat; "and Nep will go along with you."

Nep was the dog. He expressed his disappointment in various ways.

"You shall come back with us, Nep; now be a good dog and do as I wish."

Nep barked his submission and stood still as the pair of ponies answered to their mistress's touch of the rein and trotted away.

"Poor Nep!" said Miss Dunstan, "do you see that he turns his head away? He

could not restrain himself if he watched us go. When discipline requires that he should not do something he likes, he shuts his eyes or hides himself from temptation."

"A true philosopher," I said.

"Indeed he is," she answered, "Miss Dobbs says he is far wiser than any man she has ever met, but you know she has peculiar views."

"Yes, I remember, though I have often thought she estimated me correctly when she more than suggested that I was a fool."

"She was not rude enough to say anything like that to your face; if she did it was only bravado, she did not mean it; and she is very eccentric, as you know."

"She looked at me pointedly, and said she hated fools."

"Did she really?"

"Yes, do you not remember?"

No reply. Only a harmless flourish of her long white whip, at which the ponies scampered along at increased speed.

"It was at the partridge-shooting, on

that second of September when they brought us the news that Napoleon had given up his sword at Sedan."

"What a memory you have!" she said.

"It seems but yesterday," I replied, "and I wish we could put the clock back and drive straight into that green Breedon lane and continue that old feast of St. Partridge."

Now she carressed the ponies gently with her whip, and pulled them into a walk; for we were ascending a hill.

"I think we will drive through Chatsworth Park," she said; "it is a long way round, but we have plenty of time, and I had intended to make a detour of a few miles to give Nep a run. This is the first morning in spring."

"And I have robbed Nep of his treat," I said.

"He is so noisy, and I could not take care of both of you and the ponies as well."

"Then you think I am sufficient of a philosopher to be classed with Nep?" and I

felt at the moment that I would not mind being a dog for her sake.

"I think very highly of Nep," she said; "but he is not so great a traveller as you; he has not even visited his native land, where Cabot or some other Ulysses of several hundred years ago discovered his ancestors."

"He is wise enough to know when he is well off," I said.

By this time we had entered Chatsworth Park. The sun was flashing on the gilded windows of that very palace which my father had told me of when I nestled by his knee, and devoured his stories of the great Ulysses. The spreading oaks made shadows on the green turf. The Derwent meandered along its pebbly bed. A hare went bounding along the level mead. Rooks were calling to each other among the trees beyond the ducal mansion. The national flag was flying over the wooded heights by the observatory.

"Have we plenty of time?"

"Yes, the train is not due until two o'clock."

"Time enough for the ponies to walk all through the park?"

"Yes."

"It is so pleasant to talk. Do you not wonder why I came to Derwent Hall?"

"I think it is part of some studied plan to give me pleasure."

"No," I said, "I found your house quite by accident."

"Indeed."

"When I was a boy at Scarsdale a great ridge of hills shut in the little town from the rest of the world. My father took pleasure in telling me of a palace that lay in the valley beyond them. It was Chatsworth. I knew nothing of it in those days, except that it was grander than anything Ulysses ever saw. The other day I thought I would like once more to see my native place. Wordsworth's poem on his revisiting Yarrow had always greatly impressed me. Scarsdale ought to have been my Yarrow. I

went there to revive my childhood; but my thoughts would run off to 'The Cedars,' and the pastoral country round about Warrington Manor. It came into my mind, nevertheless, that I would pick up that childish thread of romance, and follow the clue of it over the hills, and discover the palace in the valley, as I might have done when a boy. It was an odd notion, frivolous perhaps; so I kept it to myself; it was like putting a boyish fancy into practice. I climbed the white road, and halted finally at 'The Dunstan Arms' to discover 'Derwent Hall.'"

"How very strange!" she said, checking the ponies until they stood still, "and did you not know I lived there?"

"Not until the Hunts told me."

"I thought you knew I had bought Derwent Hall; did we not speak of it at Antwerp?"

"Yes, but I had no knowledge of the precise situation of it; and, going forth in fancy to discover the palace of my youth, I

found Derwent Hall. Surely the genius of good fortune put it into my head to explore these hills, and guided me to the threshold of your Derbyshire home!"

The ponies moved on.

"Do you think so? Then I am very glad."

"If one read it in a book one would not believe it."

I took good care to say nothing of my encounter with Mr. Thomas Barnes, "the lawyer chap."

"It is quite a romance in its way," she said, "and you did not know of Colonel Ernstone's arrival?"

"No."

"Nor of your mother coming down, when she only left here last week with the intention of staying in town for a month, at the end of which time I had promised to join her?"

"No."

"It is strange," she said, "but I quite agree with you as to the interposition of good fortune in all this."

Then I suddenly remembered that Ernstone's visit was connected with something unpleasant, even bearing the possible suggestion that this house of my lady of the manor might vanish from her possession like the flying palace in "The Arabian Nights." The thought brought me straight down from the skies of sentiment and romance to the level earth of reality ; but the sun shone, the birds carolled, the river flashed along between its green banks, the harness-bells played a merry tune in response to the drowsy tinkle of distant sheep-folds ; and an emotion, too deep and fervent for any other feeling to intervene, lifted my thoughts and fancies once more to the height of the joyous inspiration of the spring—the very season which the poets associate with the dawn of the tender passion. All of a sudden it seemed as if the past had become an entire blank to me. I lived only in that present moment. I realised all the possibilities of a flame re-lighted which had occupied the philosopher's thoughts. Then

a chill of fear struck me, lest the tender endowment of my soul in respect of this dear creature, who sat by my side, had come too late. She had never seemed so beautiful, so desirable, as at this moment, the fresh breezes of spring in her face, her red lips half-parted, a lock of her rich brown hair, that had escaped from her hat, fluttering upon her shoulder, her eyes catching the blue-grey hues of the sky. How sharp is the poet's etching of the influence and effect of the gracious state of love!

> "I tell thee, Love is Nature's second sun,
> Causing a spring of virtues where he shines;
> And as without the sun, the world's great eye,
> All colours, beauties both of Art and Nature,
> Are given in vain to men; so, without Love,
> All beauties bred in women are in vain,
> All virtues bred in men lie buried;
> For Love informs them as the sun doth colours."

"Do you remember that day we spoke of just now—that second of September six years ago?" I asked suddenly, my heart in my words, and my voice trembling.

"Yes, quite well," she said.

The gilded gates of the park now came

well in sight, and somehow they seemed to stimulate my purpose; for in a few minutes we should be once more upon the highway. The ponies were still walking, the reins lying loosely upon their white backs, the whip in its socket, the driver's hands reclining upon the soft apron-rug.

"I wonder if you remember the point at which our conversation was invaded by that blustering messenger?"

"It is so long ago," she said; but her voice was modulated almost into a whisper.

"May I say what I was going to say then, and should have said, but for that business of Sedan?"

"Yes, if you really think you know what you were going to say," she answered.

"I *do* know," I said, placing my hand upon hers. "I was going to say, 'I love you, will you some day be my wife?'"

Her hand trembled beneath my own. She did not speak. The ponies stopped. A blackbird upon an adjacent oak burst out into a rich loud song.

"I have taken you by surprise," I said; "forgive me, I should have waited for a more fitting opportunity. You are not angry?"

"No."

It was a whisper. The song of the blackbird almost drowned it.

"If I had made that confession in the Breedon Valley on that September day what would you have said?"

"Yes," she answered.

"And now, what would you say?"

I could not keep the question back.

"Ask me when we return," she said.

I looked up into her face. It was pale and agitated.

"Forgive me!" I said, "it was a selfish thing to speak to you as I have done so suddenly."

"No, no," she said.

"Let me take the reins; may I?"

"Yes," she said.

I stepped out of the carriage. She moved into my seat. A feeling of triumph coursed through my veins; and with it a sense of

exercising a protective influence over my companion. There was a flattering significance in her handing over the reins to me. It was emblematic of submission. I could have fallen at her feet in recognition of this true woman's token that she too was conquered.

"You forgive me!" I said, as the ponies broke into a trot, "for I love you with all my heart and soul!"

I took her unresisting right hand in my left and pressed it to my lips.

"Say one word—sweetheart—Helen!" I urged in the selfish madness of my success.

"My dear Horace!" was her reply.

The Park-gates flew open. I gave the ponies their heads as freely as I had given rein to my own thoughts and desires. They scampered along the road, pausing no more until they halted at the little road-side station, where Nep greeted them, and his mistress, with noisy demonstrations.

We had not long to wait. The station was full of excitement. Six passengers were

"going on." They were all wildly busy with their luggage. The station-master was full of anxious importance. He had time, however, to touch his hat to Miss Dunstan. Nep bounded hither and thither. There was much flashing of signals. It was a relief, all this, to the strain upon Helen's thoughts and my own—a useful prosaic diversion. We had hardly paced the platform twice before the train came steaming into the station.

A few minutes later my mother was sitting by the side of Miss Dunstan, and the ponies were scampering back to Derwent Hall. I drove in with Tom and the luggage.

"I was to tell you, sir," said the servant, "from Colonel Ernstone, that he wants to see you as soon as you can, private; that is, you was to go to his room the minute you could."

"Very well," I said.

"And I was to drive the shortest way back and get ahead of the ponies."

"All right, Tom," I answered, "I am quite at the Colonel's disposal."

"Yes, sir, then I'll just put the 'oss along."

"By all means," I said.

The chestnut responded gaily to a touch of the whip, and, taking a narrow lane outside the Park, we headed the ponies, by twenty minutes, at Derwent Hall.

CHAPTER VI.

"TREAD YOU NEVER SO LIGHTLY SOME OF THE MUD OF THIS WORK-A-DAY WORLD SHALL STICK."

"What is it, Ernstone?" I asked, the moment I was shown to his room.

"The devil to pay," he said.

"Then pay him and have done with it," I answered.

"You are in good spirits."

"I am."

"Uncommonly good spirits!" said Ernstone.

"Uncommonly," I replied; "never was happier than at this moment!"

"I am glad of it," he said, "for I was never more perplexed."

"Indeed!"

"Tell me all about it."

"I will; sit down."

He pointed to a sofa, a broad comfortable seat in front of the fire. We were in his bedroom. I sat down.

"Last night you thrashed a man at 'The Dunstan Arms'?"

"Yes, I had that great satisfaction."

"There was an old shabby fellow with him?"

"Yes."

"They are now in this house. Do you know what their business is?"

"One of them is either a lawyer or a lawyer's clerk, I believe."

"Yes, Mr. Thomas Barnes," said Ernstone, "and the other is his man!"

"Oh," I said. "Well?"

"They are in the next room."

"Indeed!" I said, becoming curicus.

"The next room is my dressing-room," he said, "and I have induced them to stay there until I could see you."

"You are very mysterious, Ernstone,"

I said, rising, "it is to save me pain or trouble, I know. Am I to be arrested for an assault, or what?"

"No, it is worse than that," he said; "what I am striving to do, is to save Miss Dunstan from annoyance and humiliation."

"Tell me then, what is the matter?" I said, anxiously.

"That fellow Barnes holds a writ of distraint upon this property, and the shabby person is a bailiff, whom he is about to leave here in possession," Ernstone replied.

"A fitting conclusion to my brawling!" I said, bitterly, "and probably the result of it."

"No, they were in the neighbourhood last night, but a writ cannot be executed after sundown, and it is quite likely that your intervention delayed the business. I knew what was going to happen in time to get down here and call on Barnes. The two beasts indeed came with me from Scarsdale, so that I could the better break the shock of

it, somehow. It was at Scarsdale this morning that I learnt you were here, and then I had at once a bright idea."

"Yes?"

"I will tell you what it is presently. In the meantime let me inform you that you are at the bottom of this trouble."

"I?"

"Your step-father is more malicious than I thought. In a joint action against him and Miss Dunstan in connection with a colliery investment, his solicitors, who were supposed to be protecting Miss Dunstan's interests, have allowed judgment to be signed and a writ to issue on Derwent Hall. Your mother had told Mr. Welby about our meeting at Antwerp, and of the probability of that match, which your uncle desired so much, being arranged. He thinks you mercenary, and he also now hates Miss Dunstan for your sake. The document and its bearers in the next room are his emissaries of revenge. He wishes to annoy Miss Dunstan and to disappoint you."

"Miserable wretch!" I exclaimed, "what then is to be done?"

"The amount claimed is fifteen thousand pounds. I have telegraphed from Scarsdale in your name, requesting Messrs. Blandford and Blandford to hold themselves in readiness to remit to the bankers there, by wire, to your order, and to be paid to you in person that sum."

"Yes, well?"

"You have not drawn the sum Mr. Waller placed with Blandfords to your credit?"

"No, not a penny."

"My brilliant idea is that we now drive, as fast as horses will carry us, to Scarsdale, and that you ask for the money. If even we do not get there until after banking hours, I have arranged with the manager that he will still honour the order of Rothschilds; and the principal of the firm in which Barnes is a junior partner will come back with us, and, giving a proper receipt for the money, will order a surrender and retreat."

"My dear Ernstone, you are a genius as well as a friend in need. Come along, let us go at once."

"First a word to the enemy!" said Ernstone, and he disappeared into the next room.

If my love affair in Italy had in it strong elements of romance, my present one threatened to annex prosaic, if not vulgar, aspects. This thought passed through my mind in a vague way, but it did not disturb the settled happiness that had taken possession of it. I think the idea that I would not be sorry if Helen were no longer rich, invaded my common sense and conquered it. Such an event would place my love beyond question of those mercenary motives which Mr. Welby was ready to ascribe to it.

"That's all right!" said Ernstone, coming back, "I have tipped Barnes, and undertaken to make it up between you. A mutual apology is what he suggests. Until we return they consent to be locked up with two bottles of port wine and a tin of biscuits.

Must not starve the garrison you know. I have a note ready written to explain to Miss Dunstan our sudden disappearance, and mentioning the hour of our return."

A carriage and pair of horses were awaiting us at the south entrance of the house. The driver had already received his instructions, and we were quickly on the road to Scarsdale. On the way our conversation never flagged. So far as I can remember it ran along as follows :—

"Is not this a strange business altogether?" I asked.

"Yes."

"You think it is spite and not necessity? I mean do you think Mr. Welby is a rich man?"

"He has the reputation of being wealthy."

"You think he is merely trying to injure Miss Dunstan on my account?"

"That is my impression."

"Are not the solicitors, then, very lax in their management of her affairs?"

"She is not wholly in the hands of

one firm. Her Worcestershire property is managed by the local lawyers at Breedon; her public works are in the hands of the London solicitors, who had charge of much of her father's business; and Welby's solicitors are jointly concerned for her in the mining investments which she has made under the advice of Mr. Welby."

"Has my mother a special settlement?"

"I think so."

"Miss Dunstan's property is very large?"

"Yes."

"Do you think she will be angry at this interference of ours?"

"I propose to acquaint her with it when the matter is settled, sparing her the humiliation, at present anyhow, of the details, and to urge upon her the concentration of all her business matters in the hands of one firm."

"Wise and considerate," I said, "but only what might be expected from you, Ernstone. You know I hate flattery as much as you do, and I know that good fellows dislike being told they are good fellows; but I must, dear

old friend, tell you that I think you the best fellow in the world."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" said Ernstone, "what is the good of friends unless they make themselves useful?"

"'Some man is a friend for his own occasion, and will not abide in the day of trouble,' is, I think, a reading from Scripture," I replied.

"That sort of person should be drummed out of the regiment of friendship," said Ernstone; "but you always over-estimate my little services. I must have something to do. There is no woman in the world for whom I have so much respectful admiration as for Mrs. Welby; next to my own daughter I love Helen; your uncle is the dearest friend, anywhere approaching my own age, I have on earth; and I add to these follies an affection for you! It is mere selfishness after all if I am fortunate enough to be of service to any of these good people who trust me and believe in me. I am not much of a sentimentalist, Horace, but I believe the

greatest real happiness to be obtained on earth is in the healthy and sincere intercourse of true friends; and, mind you, it is not necessary that the exercise of the offices of friendship should only exist between man and man. I believe in the friendship of a man and a woman, and when we deny to two people this relationship because they are man and woman we shut out of life one of the greatest pleasures of friendship."

"Yes, no doubt."

I did not quite see the full drift of Ernstone's unexpected dissertation upon men and women's friendships. I understood it at a later day, and am blessed now with a full appreciation of it. The carriage rattled along as we talked, past "The Dunstan Arms," past "The Rose and Crown," over moor and fell, along deep lanes, over white roads, and pulled up in due course at the Scarsdale telegraph office. Ernstone dispatched to Blandfords his second telegram. Then we hastened to the lawyers, Short and Barnes. They handed us a message ad-

dressed to me. I opened it. Messrs. Blandford informed me that they awaited my instructions. These were now on the way to London. Short and Barnes drew up the necessary papers for closing the transaction. Then we went to the bankers. The manager invited us into his private room. He was good enough to be complimentary to me, and entertained us both with an account of the public banquet that was to be offered to me in my native town.

In less than an hour we were on our way back, with Short and Barnes's receipt for the fifteen thousand pounds, and accompanied by Mr. Short himself. It was quite dark when Ernstone led the way to his dressing-room, and unlocked the garrison. Mr. Short thereupon informed his partner and "the man" that the warrant had been satisfied, and they could quit Derwent Hall; whereupon the enemy of my youth, with whom I had picked that Quixotic quarrel on the previous day, asked me for my apology and my hand.

"Certainly," I said; "I regret that I beat you, Mr. Barnes, if you also regret that you gave me cause for doing so."

"Yes, I regret and apologise, and hope we shall be friends in the future."

"Thank you, Mr. Barnes," I said, and I really felt sorry for the poor creature.

We shook hands, and presently Ernstone and I had the satisfaction of seeing the trio driven off the Derwent domain in the dog-cart.

"And now to reconnoitre our own position," said the Colonel, ringing the bell.

"What about dinner?" he inquired of the servant.

"Mistress, Mrs. Welby, and Miss Dobbs have dined; the cook is waiting your orders, and a table is laid for you and Mr. Durand in the great hall; the ladies dined in the small dining-room."

"Oh, very well," said Ernstone.

"What orders for the cook?"

"To do his best, Jones, for two hungry men, and we will be ready for dinner when he is ready for us."

"And now, by the way, you had better show Mr. Durand to his room. It takes me twelve minutes to dress, Horace."

"All right!" I said.

"And if you please," said the servant, "mistress and the ladies will be glad to see you in the gallery parlour after dinner."

"Our compliments, Jones, and we shall pay our respects to them as soon as possible."

"Yes, Colonel," said Jones, and thereupon Ernstone commenced his toilette and I proceeded to my own room, feeling that many interesting, not to say startling, events, had taken place since I had reappeared some fifty-six hours previously on the threshold of the house where I was born.

It jarred slightly upon my somewhat romantic sensibilities the taint of vulgarity that seemed to hang about these recent events; and in writing this narrative I have doubted greatly whether the principles of true art are not outraged by this association of poetry, romance, and love, with a public-house

brawl and "a man in possession." If any of my friends should insist upon considering this autobiography from an artistic stand-point, let me hope that they may regard the common-place details referred to as a recognition of the modern mania for so-called realism. I may thus escape from what otherwise might be looked upon as an unpardonable ignorance of the true canons of art. The introduction of money affairs into love passages may be considered to degrade the poetry of passion. I know a rigid *esthete* who cannot endure any mention of Oliver Goldsmith because he "swam in debt," and actually allowed himself to be "dunned for his milk-score and arrested for rent;" but I am not an *esthete*, and I remember the great heart that beat above the empty pocket and the legacy of sweet poetry it has left to us. So above the suggestions of the world's common place, and the earth that is earthy, do I place high in my thoughts the noble woman who has given me her love.

"Dinner, sir!" said a voice at the door; "the Colonel said I was to show you the way, sir."

He led me along a tapestried corridor, and down a broad staircase, upon the walls of which hung relics of the chase; down into a hall where the firelight played upon a polished oak floor, and into the old dining-room, which was a picture of magnificent comfort. The north side of the great gothic hall was lighted in the day-time with four oriel windows. They were now draped with marone velvet curtains; the space between was panelled oak, with the work of a great master let into each of the central panels, and above and below were plaques in china or bronze. The south side of the room was occupied by the fire-place, set deep into an ancient ingle-nook with carved oak seats on either side. Outside the ingle-nook stood several high-backed chairs, and on the walls were hung a battle-piece by a Dutch master, and some finely-finished figure-studies by Velasquez and Rembrandt. The east end of

the room was filled up with a music-gallery, underneath which was an old oak sideboard ornamented with several pieces of antique plate. At the west end there were a couple of cabinets guarded by two full suits of armour. In the centre of the room and opposite to the fire-place a table was laid for dinner. Chairs were placed for two guests. Ernstone came into the room from the opposite side as I entered it.

With the dessert we received a message from the lady of the house. The Bakewell Madrigal Society were in the habit of meeting at the hall for practice once a week. Would we like to hear them sing? Of course we would. The lamps in the music-gallery at the east end of the hall were thereupon turned up. A company of choral singers entered and sang, "Who will o'er the Downs with Me" and "Sir Patrick Spens." It was not difficult to have imagined oneself away back in the middle ages, only that I suspect neither the fruit, the wines, nor the singing were equal to those of the Derwent Hall of

to-day; and my fancy travelled through the vocal music to the little gallery parlour beyond, where Helen and my mother were listening to the madrigals. I wondered if she had already told my mother of what had passed between us in Chatsworth Park.

"And to think," said Colonel Ernstone, "that it should be possible for Welby's malice to overshadow this dear old place!"

"Don't let us talk of it," I said, "the shadow has passed, though the memory of it is to me something akin to the trail of a slug upon a ripe peach."

And I think, if this autobiography were an imaginary one, I should have left out, in these latter chapters, Mr. Barnes and his man. It seems to me that they encumber the sweetness and light of the place with a touch of the gutter; yet how continually one brushes shoulders with the leprosy of the world everywhere! In London, morally and physically, it is continually at your side. Poverty and wealth, crime and virtue,

misery and happiness, what a motley crowd it is! And how close together in the London streets! One soon grows accustomed to the strange incongruities there; too soon. But here in the Derbyshire dales, in that valley beyond the Scarsdale hills, I looked for all the gentle dignity of peace, and something of the romance of a poetic past. I found that I was still in the great world. In the grounds of the Ulyssean palace itself I heard the whistle of the London express and knew that it burrowed its way right under Haddon on its flight to and from the metropolis. What matters that fate flings a freckled little lawyer and a dingy bailiff into the realistic picture? One can still follow the amatory expedition of the gallant riding over the downs to gain a winsome bride; one can still enter into the vocal spirit of the fatal voyage of Sir Patrick Spens. The sanguinary rites and the unholy scenes of domestic life in the Boulonagan islands did not destroy my memories of the pastoral lands of Warrington Manor.

"Coffee here or in the gallery parlour?" asked the servant.

"In the gallery parlour," was my quick response.

The man led the way up the grand staircase, along a narrow corridor and into a small panelled room, which gave upon the music-gallery.

My mother, Miss Dunstan, and Miss Dobbs were awaiting us, Helen presiding over a dainty tea-table. Miss Dobbs rose and bowed.

"Am I still so objectionable a person in your eyes?" I said; "may we not shake hands after all these years?"

"Oh, yes, by all means," said Miss Dobbs, "if you wish it."

My mother and Helen exchanged glances, as if they had already discussed the manner in which Miss Dobbs would receive me.

We shook hands.

"I congratulate you Mr. Durand on your great achievements," said Miss Dobbs.

"Thank you very much; I hope to surpass anything I have done yet," I said.

"Indeed!" she replied. "There is, I suppose, no end to a man's triumphs. It would be rude if I said you have already accomplished a great deal more than I expected you would."

"Not rude, honest, and characteristic of Miss Dobbs," I replied.

"Thank you," said Donna Sancho, taking her seat in a prim stiff fashion.

My mother and Helen smiled.

"You need not wait," said the lady of the house to the servants who were in attendance, "draw the curtains of the gallery, and see that the ladies and gentlemen have supper when they have finished their programme."

A *portière* had been raised over an archway leading to the gallery. The servants lowered it. The charm of distance was thus given to the choral music. "O would that my Love," arranged as a quartet, now fell upon the ear as if it might have been a serenade under my lady's window. Adjacent

to the gallery parlour there was a tropical conservatory protected by a high bank, on the slope of which part of the east end of the hall was built; so that the palm-house could be entered through a corridor in which there were alcoves of flowers. They were prettily lighted with lamps. After coffee and a general chat I found an opportunity to talk apart with Helen. Every married woman is a match-maker; and my mother lent her assistance to the creation of my opportunity.

Miss Dunstan was regarded, I believe, by many persons as what is called a strong-minded woman, inasmuch as she had instituted a business-like system of charity, done battle with a number of persons who make a trade of so-called philanthropy, written a pamphlet in favour of extending out-door parochial relief, and made more than one public speech on the education and protection of the poor. "Strong-minded" is used towards woman as a term of reproach; but I have known more than one or two

instances in which the desire to help to drag this poor old world out of the gutter has been associated with the most tender and gentle natures. Only the strongest natural impulse to be useful to suffering humanity could bring such women into the public eye. Miss Dunstan was one of these "angels upon earth," with a brain of almost masculine power, the motor of its action a heart full of tender sympathies, and a nature susceptible of the warmest affection.

I hope I shall be forgiven if, sitting by her side, talking over our plans for the future, I felt vain of my conquest. To hear this beautiful woman confess that she returned my love; to win from her the naming of a date for our marriage; to feel a cold chill at the thought that I might have lost the happiness in store for me; all this, you may be sure, held me in a condition of pleasant excitement.

When it was settled between us that, from a day already named, we should part no more, we talked of the dear old days in

Worcestershire. Warrington Manor, I learnt, would come back into Helen's possession very shortly, and whatever happened she had already determined always to reside there during the hunting seasons. She had bought Derwent Hall chiefly because my mother liked it. Mrs. Welby was a native of the county, and had been brought up among its hills and valleys.

"But my own heart, as yours does, goes out to the valley of the Avon," said Helen. "I do not think any country is so pastoral and sweet as that which surrounds Warrington Manor."

"And none can ever have such dear associations for us," I said, and she returned the pressure of my hand.

"Nevertheless, Colonel Ernstone declares you will always be a traveller; he quoted to us at Antwerp Tennyson's lines on Ulysses, making the great explorer, even in his later days, resign his sceptre to Telemachus, and sail the seas in search of new adventures."

"My ship is sailing into a sweet and

peaceful harbour which I never looked to reach," I said, "and, wherever it may sail in future, you and I, Helen, will never part company. What do you say to our visiting together those sunny lands which yonder palms faintly suggest? Think of our visiting dear old Jeffrey Waller at Manilla! Fancy lying at anchor off Kututu, awaiting a visit from the Irish king!"

"I fear my thoughts are too much occupied with the Boulonagans when I think of Kututu," she answered.

"When we visit those distant seas together, Helen," I said, "we will make assurance doubly sure—a steam-yacht after the pattern of Waller's, manned by picked men, commanded by an officer of the Royal Navy, and fitted with more luxurious comforts than were ever dreamt of by Cleopatra, or the furnishers of her gilded barge."

As we wandered back to the gallery parlour, where Colonel Ernstone and Miss Dobbs were finishing a game of chess, having my mother as an interested looker-on,

the choristers were singing the last bars of a dreamy madrigal, the refrain of which was "Good-night! good-night!" As if by general consent, we accepted the suggestion of the music, and took our leave of each other for the night, my mother kissing me on the forehead, and whispering, "Horace, you have won the sweetest, purest woman in the world!"

"I do believe it, indeed!" I said, "which proves that good fortune is no respecter of persons."

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE WAY TO THE CEDARS.

The next day my match-making mother was gratified with the intelligence I gave her; and Ernstone said, "You are at last the lucky dog your uncle spoke of." Miss Dobbs was unusually civil to me; and I was indeed very happy.

"I think it would be only common kindness now," said Helen, "if you were to go and see your uncle, poor dear man!"

"I will go," I said, "you are right."

"Of course she is," said Ernstone, when I spoke of it; "men are naturally selfish; you would have liked to go on staying here until the wedding."

"Nothing would be more delightful," I replied.

"Why, certainly, as our friend in the play says, but the truth is we both ought to be off; I came on business; my business concluded, I have no right to stay any longer; you came by accident—Fortune is always leading you by the hand. After what has occurred, propriety, I believe, demands that you should now be almost a stranger at Derwent Hall until you are master of it."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, I am sure it is."

It was hard work to part with Helen even for a few days. Ernstone said, it would be quite correct for my mother and Helen to pay a visit to "The Cedars" during my stay there. As for himself, he must return to London. Before he left, with my permission, he should speak to Miss Dunstan about business. My route to Breedon partly covered Ernstone's road to London. My mother and Helen drove with us to the station. No white ponies this time, and we made no detour through Chats-

worth Park. A handsome, roomy barouche and pair carried us to the railway, and we both watched it return as far as we could see it, after we were deposited at the station. We noticed that it took the road leading to Chatsworth Park. Thinking over the incident of the first time I had ever been driven through these lovely grounds, I could not help feeling as if there might have been some kindly forecast of happiness, in that early longing of my boyhood to travel over the white road to the palace that was more beautiful than any Ulysses ever saw.

At Derby we got the London papers, and among them a weekly journal of gossip, from which Ernstone read:—"Strange rumours are afloat, affecting the financial credit of a prominent politician, not to say a statesman, whose recent losses in certain mining transactions have already been made public. The gentleman in question is also the proprietor of several factories, which, owing to the prohibitive tariffs of France, Germany, and America, have not been worked at a profit

for nearly ten years. Wages have been paid out of capital to the tune of, it is said, fully a thousand a week during the past three years. But for this the operatives of the district in question would have been paupers. It is said that notice has been given for the stoppage of the works next week."

Ernstone had taken a seat next to me, in order that he might read the paragraph aloud without disturbing a gentleman who, with his travelling-cap pulled over his eyes, was fast asleep in a corner of the carriage.

"Welby!" he said.

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it," he answered.

"Then the Short and Barnes business was not malice but necessity."

"Both," said Ernstone.

"What will happen?"

"A crash that will be a nine days' wonder," said Ernstone, "the ending of an ambitious life in the Bankruptcy Court."

"And my mother?"

"When your mother found that all sympathy between herself and Mr. Welby had ceased to exist, a private agreement of separation was drawn up, and fresh settlements were made. For the sake of appearances they occasionally lived in the same house and received there during the London season," said Ernstone.

"Ah, my poor mother!" I could not help saying, "how could she ever have seen the smallest prospect of happiness with such a man!"

"She was very young and inexperienced, I have always understood," said Colonel Ernstone.

"And he was rich," I found myself saying, "and she was ambitious. Ah, well! she has suffered. Thank heaven she lives, and is still comparatively young and pretty. Bless her dear heart, she will be one and the other when her hair is white for that matter!"

"I should not wonder!" said Ernstone, and by this it was time he changed carriages

for London, leaving me to go on to Birmingham, Worcester, and Breedon.

The old gentleman in the corner woke up at the call of the guard.

"Why, how do you do?" he said, looking at me.

"Mr. Blandford!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, the same—odd we should meet here—have been to Scarsdale to see that all was right in that little matter—on my way back to town. Good day!"

"Stay, Mr. Blandford," I said, "would it be possible for you to accompany me to Breedon? I greatly need your advice."

"If I could get to town to-morrow night, yes," he said.

"I will engage that you do so."

"Very well then, I go with you. Guard, get me a ticket, can you? for Breedon—I do not go on to London."

"All right, sir," said the guard.

"But I am for St. Pancras," said Ernstone, handing his bag to a porter.

"Before you go, Ernstone, let me intro-

duce you—Mr. Blandford, Colonel Ernstone."

"Glad to know you, sir," said Ernstone; "if Durand is wise he has much to consult you about; I shall see Miss Dunstan's lawyers to-morrow. It is another piece of Durand's good luck to meet you here so opportunely."

The next moment Ernstone was gone, and Blandford and I were on our way to Breedon. We had the compartment to ourselves. Blandford looked as trim and bright as when I first encountered him in Essex Street. A clean shaven face, with the exception of short side whiskers, hair closely cropped and grey almost to whiteness, strong regular teeth, dark hazel eyes, broad in the shoulder, courtly of manner, he was a perfect type of the higher grade of family lawyers.

"I am glad you have resolved to act up to Mr. Waller's wishes—a great good man Waller, and rich as Crœsus," said the lawyer.

"Have you heard from him?"

"Yes, twice by telegraph from Singapore—instructions in regard to the erection of a memorial to his father and mother in Marylebone churchyard—and information that he sailed last week for Ceylon; also a special message giving his best remembrances to you, which I sent to your hotel."

"A kind old gentleman!" I said, "I don't know what I should have done without him in the East."

"Nor he without you, so he said—loves you as a son--nothing left to live for but to see you happy and prosperous. So he assured me—eccentric no doubt—he saw a great deal of you out yonder?"

"Well yes; and he was deeply interested in my adventures," I said.

"Not a relation in the wide world that he knows of," went on Mr. Blandford; "odd that he should have stayed away from the old people in Oxford Street so long; but intended to return, so he said, every year, and the time passed on and on. Travellers and explorers are odd people--Livingstone

for example, neither glory, home, nor family brought him back. Suppose you want to be off again, eh?"

"No, not yet, Mr. Blandford; but what do you think of a honeymoon trip round the world, and a call on the way at Manilla, and perhaps at Kututu?" I said.

"Well, if the bride is a good sailor, and the bridegroom has a fancy for the sea and for strange countries, I should say they know what is likely to please them best. When I married I took my wife straight home into Essex Street, forty years ago, and we have lived there ever since. You must give us the pleasure of your company some day —and bring your good lady—before you go on that long trip you speak of, eh?"

"I should like it very much," I said.

"Since it may transpire in our business relations, may I ask who the lady is?"

"Miss Dunstan," I said.

"Ah, so I thought—permit me to congratulate you. She is involved in the finan-

cial troubles of your step-father—but not seriously—that is, not seriously for her."

"Then it is true that Mr. Welby is in difficulties?"

"Oh yes—concluded you knew all about it—that was my reading of your call for fifteen thousand pounds."

I thought it best then to explain the whole of the circumstances connected with the matter.

"You can trust Colonel Ernstone?" was his interrogative comment.

"With my life," I said.

"I would trust some men with my life whom I would not trust with my money," he replied.

"He is my uncle's oldest friend, mine too, and he was the intimate friend of Miss Dunstan's father," I said.

"Colonel Ernstone?" said the lawyer reflectively, "of Redan and Cawnpore fame?"

"The same."

"Then I know all about him—you are

right, you may trust him with your honour, your money, your life—quite right, I beg his pardon."

At Birmingham I sent my uncle a telegram announcing the approach of my companion and myself, mentioning that I had met Mr. Blandford accidentally on the road, and had important business with him. By the time we arrived at our destination I had enlightened Mr. Blandford upon many points which I thought it well that he should know concerning myself, my hopes, and my ambition. At the Breedon station a simple brougham awaited us, with Sandy on the box by the side of the coachman. I saw him jump down as the train ran in alongside of the platform. The next moment he was saying, "Ah, Master Horace, you've come at last, and the Squire's mad to see ye."

"Sandy, old fellow," I said, taking his rough honest hand, "it is music to hear your voice again."

"Ah, God bless you, Master Horace, and

I thank the Lord I've lived to see this day!" exclaimed Sandy.

"Jeffrey Waller was right," said Blandford, as we were driven towards the Cedars, "he is a judge of character, and there is luck in his very touch; you will do honour to his name as you have done to your own; the expression of that old Scotchman's face is the best testimony to character you could ever receive."

"The merit is in his own good heart, the dear old chap!" I said, "and you must not forget that his master, my uncle, turned me out of his house as an ungrateful blackguard, and on reflection I am not sure but that he was right."

"Wait until I see him," said the lawyer.

He had not long to wait. The dear old fellow was standing in the porch. He gripped both my hands, but was too much overcome to speak.

Having handed over Mr. Blandford to the care of Sandy, he insisted upon himself showing me to my old room. When we were

inside and the door was shut, he said, taking my hand again, "Horace, this is the happiest moment of my life."

"And mine, uncle!" I responded.

The old man turned his head aside to hide his emotion, and I was glad he did so; for his touching welcome had brought the tears into my eyes.

It moved me also very much to see the familiar things of my boyhood, carefully preserved, almost as I had left them; my fishing-rods, cricket-bats, my gun, and a little cupboard of favourite books, occupying one side of the spacious chamber where I had slept happily and in peace, all those years between the time when I left Scarsdale and that unhappy night when I went away, with the sighing of the wind among the reeds in my sad yet stubborn heart.

* * * *

At night, after we had dined, and just as my uncle and Mr. Blandford had discovered several links of association in their early lives at college and in London, a telegram

was delivered to me from Ernstone: "Welby seized with sudden illness on his way to the House of Commons—taken home, and died at six o'clock."

CHAPTER VIII.

IS SOMETHING LIKE A SHIP THAT PUTS INTO MANY PORTS AND SAILS SAFELY HOME AT LAST.

If I had to write this work over again, I should act upon what I understand to be the general rule, that, although the Preface to a book stands first, it should be written last. It is quite possible that, had not Mr. Wilkie Collins said to a friend of mine "in writing a novel, you should always begin at the beginning," I should now have been engaged upon the Preface instead of taking up my pen to write this last chapter; for I have a high opinion of the constructive ability of the author of "The Moonstone." I ought, of course, to have remembered that, while

partaking of the characteristics of a novel, "A Modern Ulysses" is after all an autobiography, and therefore not altogether subject to those rigid rules of a fixed plan and design which were insisted upon by Lord Lytton even more severely than by Mr. Wilkie Collins. Sir Walter Scott, it is true, was not guided by the "cut and dried" principle. Mr. Anthony Trollope's "clockwork" method would have excited his loftiest scorn, for he had no belief in "literary men of method." Authors, "who can lay aside or take up the pen just at the hours appointed," could, Sir Walter thought, be never "any better than poor creatures." I do not know whether he was right or wrong; but I think if ever I wrote a real novel, that is, a story of imagination, plot, and character, I should begin by making a complete sketch of the incidents and plan and purpose of the story. When I commenced this present narrative I had it in my mind to finish it with certain events that are foreshadowed in the previous chapter,

the most important of them being my marriage with Miss Helen Dunstan. From the first I determined to dedicate the volumes to the generous King of Kututu, to whom I owed my escape from the cannibals of the Boulonagan islands. And so, with that workmanlike maxim in my mind "begin at the beginning," I wrote my "Dedicatory Preface" first, and it went to press with the early pages, the printer following me up for "more manuscript" as fast as I could write. As a consequence, some of these chapters have been written in London, some at Antwerp, several in Worcestershire, and this last one upon the balcony of Jeffery Waller's house, shaded by tall palms, through which I catch glimpses of the distant sea. At my elbow sits the best and loveliest woman in the world, and ——.

But that is not the point. It was the Dedicatory Preface about which we were speaking. I ought not to have written it until the book was finished. My original idea was to bring the narrative to an end in

England and to carry the completed book, in my trunk, on a journey of search and pleasure to the Eastern seas. "But," said Mr. Wilkie Collins to the American interviewer, "I doubt if Bulwer kept rigidly to his absolute rule of fashioning to the minutest detail the whole structure before beginning to work. It may have been his theory, but I doubt if it was his practice. It is well to have the *scenario* sketched out, but it is impossible for an author of any imagination to proceed far in the composition of a story without seeing various ways in which to turn the current; naturally he will choose the best." So it came to pass, in my case, that having settled to finish with the usual wedding peal, I found there was a point further on, which claimed to be the proper goal. This prevented my carrying the three volumes out to the East, which is not the only reason why I regret that I did not write my prefatory letter last, instead of first. Not that I have any desire to withdraw the sentiments or opinions therein expressed, but because cir-

cumstances have arisen which call for a modification of its form, and of the language in which it is expressed. On reflection, persons less hypercritically inclined than myself, may think that certain unlooked-for events, which would have induced me to write in a somewhat different strain, are after all not unpleasantly accentuated by the preface remaining unaltered; though I deem this explanation necessary, and at the same time trust it may prove not altogether uninteresting.

* * * *

A feature of modern travel is its combination of luxury and adventure. Ladies go round the world in their husbands' yachts, and make excursions to the scene of Captain Cook's death. Holiday parties penetrate the mysteries of the Eastern seas, reading their last season's novels in the shade of palm-decked creeks ten thousand miles from home. They follow the tracks of the ancient explorers in floating palaces, and I know a noble lord who succeeded

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in keeping his champagne iced right across the equator. I wonder how often these nineteenth-century navigators think of those adventurers who laid down the first courses upon the world's charts. We talked of them on board *The Pioneer*, as we steamed into waters of which we might almost have exclaimed with "the Ancient Mariner":

> We were the first that ever burst
> Into that silent sea.

We pictured Vasco Nunez climbing the other side of one of those distant hills, which bounded our horizon, to fall on his knees at sight of the great ocean he had come in search of; we tried to realize the figure of the Spanish hero, knee-deep in the Indian sea, holding aloft the banner of Castille and taking possession in the names of Don Ferdinand and Donna Juanna; and it set us marvelling at the possibility of such men as Vasco Nunez, in Spain, and Walter Raleigh, in England, falling victims at last to jealous intrigues and royal ingratitude. Success in those past days was hardly less

fatal than failure. The planter of the colony of Virginia was murdered at Westminster by order of James the First. Vasco Nunez was executed at Acla. They had both conferred exceptional glories and blessings upon the flags they served and upon the people whom they loved.

It is not surprising that the Spaniards of to-day continue to lay hands upon the islands of the Sulu and Celebes Seas. Their easy, though cruel conquests, in these waters are the ragged fringes of a once splendid inheritance. We steamed quite recently between the Bornean coast and Tavitavi (or Tawe-Tawe as Jeffrey Waller called it), and wondered why the English government or Rajah Brooke had not taken possession of it; "for," said Waller, "its occupation would just break the chain of Spanish stations that stretch across the channel between the Celebes Sea and the China Sea, and which they will one day complete."* Indeed Mr.

* Spanish troops have occupied the island since these lines were written.

Waller greatly blamed the British government for permitting Spain and Holland to plant their flags indiscriminately upon the various islands of these Pacific and Indian oceans. "In many cases," he said, "they do not occupy the lands, but they add them on their charts to their existing settlements, and one day between Spain, Holland, France, and Russia, England will find a new Eastern question upon her hands quite as important as that which includes the water-way of the Suez Canal."

Colonel Ernstone and Mr. Waller were never tired of discussing these things, and Mrs. Ernstone, Mrs. Horace Durand, and the present writer, were an excellent audience as *The Pioneer* steamed on her speculative course for Kututu. According to *The Straits Times* and other journals, published at certain stations of civilisation in what may be generally called the Indian Ocean, travellers studying the prospects of North Borneo and the adjacent islands are in the habit of consulting a book entitled "The

New Ceylon." One of them considers its forecasts overdone. A letter which we read at Sarawak, in the journal just quoted, treated the author as somewhat of a dreamer; though the critic himself finished with suggestions of possibilities that eclipse the sanguine predictions of the author's most problematical chapters. Many of the details of exploration in "The New Ceylon" were founded upon private reports written by Mr. Witti, an Anglo-Austrian explorer, whose death at the hands of a party of savages, worthy of the Bulonagan islands, was chronicled last year. The newness of this island of the Sun is sufficiently demonstrated in the fact that "The New Ceylon" (too fanciful a title perhaps) is evidently the accepted authority upon the new territory; though the author is far from being the first to speak of the possibilities of tropical farming in North Borneo. Among other books which Jeffrey Waller had collected for our edification and instruction was Captain Munday's "Narrative of Events in Borneo and Celebes," founded upon the

"Journals of James Brooke, Esq.," whose description of the river and town of Pandassan, ten miles to the north-east of Tampassuk, is far more glowing than anything attempted in "The New Ceylon." Since this last-mentioned work was compiled, other more important explorations have been conducted and on scientific principles, the sober details of which will, it is to be hoped, be given to the world undisguised by a "taking title," and with evidences of "roughing it," which the correspondent of *The Straits Times* insists upon as a leading feature of the growth of the island, as if any new settlement had ever been established on those "lines of luxury" which, as I have previously hinted, belong to the adventures of the wealthy, and not to the efforts of men, be they Mongolians or Europeans, clearing the forests to build new homes.

But in the latest treatise upon the newest English colony in the East a question is touched (chiefly second-hand, by the way) concerning which Jeffrey Waller had much

to say on our excursions in *The Pioneer*. I refer to the subject of the influence of England and other naval powers in the Eastern seas, and more particularly in the Pacific. It was *The Edinburgh Review*, in a critical article on Ravenstein's "Russians in the Amoor," Bax's "Eastern Seas," Colomb's "Russian Development and our Naval and Military Positions in the North Pacific," and Paul Gaffarel's "Les Colonies Françaises," which captivated the author of "The New Ceylon." When one considers that the Pacific Ocean occupies nearly one-half of the surface of the globe, and that its extent is greater than that of all the dry land, it will be conceded that here is "a world of waters" that offers space for imperial, colonial, and individual adventures. With Spain, Holland, and France, abnormally active in their respective spheres of Eastern aggrandisement, Russsia yearly extending her already powerful footing upon the coast of the North Pacific, and the Panama Canal becoming a possible factor in the question of

naval strategy in time of war, British interests in the Pacific are undergoing serious changes. "Fancy," said Mr. Waller, "the possibility of Russia being now not only in an easy position to harass Hong Kong and the China and Japan trade, but to send a squadron across the ocean in thirty days to attack the western seaport of the Dominion of Canada. General Selby Smyth commanding the British forces of Canada, speaking of the small force at Victoria, directs attention to the fact that Vancouver is only four thousand five hundred miles away from Petrapaulovsk, and that the Amoor is barely five hundred miles further off."

* * * * *

The Pioneer had met us at Singapore, whither we had travelled by a P. and O. steamer. And you have not guessed who we are? Not after the revelations of my last chapter? This pleasant journeying is not my honeymoon tour. Mr. Blandford and my uncle, strange to say, changed those first thoughts of mine.

"I took my wife home to Essex," said the old-fashioned lawyer, "and if I might offer an opinion," said my uncle, "I think Warrington Manor would be a good place to come to if you are married in London." Talking the matter over with Helen, we both found so many pleasant points of agreement in this view that Warrington Manor coming back into her possession just in time to be prepared for us, we went home from London, and commenced our partnership for life in the Worcestershire valley, to the great satisfaction of my uncle Grantley, who, as her father's friend, gave the bride away. It is not necessary that I should describe the wedding. Let it be sufficient to say that all our friends were present, the Hallams, the Blandfords, in addition to several titled ladies and gentlemen, a few literary and scientific notabilities; and that at the breakfast Mr. Justice Miller proposed the health of the bride. My uncle had advised our bringing his lordship "into the family circle, because you know after all he was Dunstan's friend,

and is one of my oldest acquaintances, and he is really a great person." My uncle, indeed, had his own way generally, and it was no small addition to my own happiness to give him pleasure. He assumed quite a paternal authority towards both Helen and myself, but with such an utter absence of anything like dictation, all his actions being so thoroughly under the control of his affection for both of us, that we found ourselves unconsciously leaning upon his judgment and advice. We drifted, as it were, upon our course, without any other thoughts for the time being than belonged to our new life. We had so much to say to each other, that for many days the time slipped by in that pastoral valley as sweetly as if we had revived Arcadia. It was summer. The fields were yellow with buttercups, the air soft with balmy winds, and the atmosphere fragrant with the perfumes of woodland blossoms. Apart also from our own mutual joys, we had a pleasant consciousness that we had both fulfilled the kindly hopes of

those two dear old men who had thought so wisely for us; though the reflection that Squire Dunstan had not lived to bless his child at the altar gave me many a secret pang. And, while I never ceased to regret this break in the link of our perfect happiness, I never thought of the past without congratulating myself on the fact that some bold wooer had not carried off Helen Dunstan while I was far away. Ah, my friend of "The Reveries," a heart may be re-lighted and kept a-blaze, even when one sanctifies a corner of it to the memory of a dead and regretted love!

But it was, after all, more or less of a honeymoon trip that cruise of *The Pioneer* which belongs to this closing chapter of the present narrative. *En route* for Singapore, we picked up Mr. and Mrs. Colonel Ernstone at Naples. It was in the winter of the year in which I discovered Derwent Hall that the widow of Mr. Welby married Colonel Ernstone, thus giving me, in my old friend, a father-in-law whom I both loved and respected,

and in whom my mother found, for the first time in her life, a congenial companion. The dear little woman, she grew to be more like a sister than a mother to me. It seemed almost ridiculous for a great bronzed and bearded fellow such as I was (and am) to call her mother, she was so *petite*, and looked so many years younger than her age. Ernstone might well have passed for my father, not alone in respect of his grey hair, but in the general appearance of responsibility and dignified bearing that characterised him. Sturdy of build, and with an elasticity of carriage that youth might have envied, time had left impressions of care upon his face, though it had not dimmed his eye nor clouded his spirits. They were a handsome couple, our fellow-voyagers, who had been travelling in Italy (in a gentle sympathetic talk with my mother I found that they had visited the Villa Verona), and, from the moment they joined us on board the P. and O. steamer, became persons of great interest to our fellow-passengers. Jeffrey Waller met

us at Singapore, and took us to Ceylon, where, at a spot near Pilligory, he had two handsome bungalows, one of them quite a recent erection. I think the latter had been specially built for me. The other was a house which he had used for some years during his trading expeditions to Colombo. It was a lovely and exceptional site, on the Mootwal river, the situation being on the slope of a partially-wooded hill. We rested here for several weeks, making excursions in pleasure-boats on the river, visiting several Dutch and other European families in the neighbourhood, (friends of our host) and superintending some finishing touches for our cruise in those mysterious waters through which we were steaming at the beginning of this chapter, and back to which point I beg to invite your attention, lest I should be tempted to loiter longer at our pleasant quarters in "the island of spices."

* * * *

Understand then that we are four days out from Sulu, steaming, as our captain

believes (according to my data, and the information obtained in the interval of my Bulonogan experiences by Mr. Jeffrey Waller) for the Bay of Kututu. We are feeling our way, at four or five knots an hour, in sight of land, moving over the clear waters as silently as if the active age of electric accumulators and their accompanying marine and other motors had come. That ghost-like boat on the Thames which is the pioneer of the new power, did not glide along more noiselessly than does Mr. Waller's superb vessel on this equatorial sea. We are all sitting together, in varying attitudes of ease, in that saloon of *The Pioneer*, where the owner first entertained me, near the quay at Meimbong. A picture of luxury then, the saloon is now a heaven of delight. Added to the familiar decorations of former days are ornamental trifles indicating the presence of ladies; and, above all, here are the ladies themselves. Mrs. Ernstone, with a half-open book upon her lap, is looking out to sea. Helen is reclining on that broad couch I told

you of. Jeffrey Waller, his white hair pushed away from his massive forehead, is sitting by the table, studying a chart; and Ernstone is reading aloud an editorial article from an American newspaper, *à propos* of Kututu, on the burlesque of royalty which is going on in the Hawaiian kingdom. You must know that I had narrated, in a famous Transatlantic journal, some of my Bulonagan adventures, and that the question of continuing the King of Kututu in the sovereignty of that island and his suzerainship of the Bulonagans had been a matter of comment in New York. "But," said the humorous Republican writer of *The Times* in that city, "for Heaven's sake, if Mr. Durand should succeed in his endeavour to confirm the kingship of the Irish adventurer under the protection of Queen Victoria's Government, let us have no repetition of the fantastic parade of Royalty which is made by the present monarch of the insignificant Hawaiian kingdom. It is very remarkable that at a time when the mummeries and for-

malities of Imperialism are being laid aside in countries in which ancient custom and centuries of usage have sanctioned them, there should be a revival of these obsolete frivolities in the little seven-by-nine kingdom lost in the wide wastes of the Pacific Ocean. During his late tour around the globe the King saw much that his predecessors could not have dreamed of. They were semi-barbaric, and he is an educated and well-read monarch. In foreign countries he saw what may be considered the true strength of nations, and he must have seen how small and mean are the shows by which royalty in ancient times maintained its hold upon the common people of monarchies. If travel enlightens a man, a travelled king surely ought to be as susceptible to illuminating influences as the humbler citizens of his domain. But the King of the Sandwich Islands comes home determined to outdo all of his predecessors, if not all of his royal brethren, in the pomp and circumstance of Imperialism. He will be crowned, forsooth,

as if he were not already a good enough king for his poor and over-taxed people. He will have thrones in plenty, two of these antiquated pieces of furniture having been ordered from the friendly and ultra-republican city of Boston. He will have a crown, too, and his Royal Majesty is reported to have selected an assortment of these gewgaws from the vast and varied assortment kept on view in the museums of Europe. There is to be a sceptre, a cap of maintenance, an orb, such as Charlemagne and Pepin were wont to hold, and other glittering and musty historical rubbish. For want of a royal hall, rich in the associations of a nation's history. and in order that the show shall be free for all, it has been determined to have the performances in the open air in front of what is called the Royal Palace. To accommodate the sight-seers, platforms have been erected, as at a circus, and from these will be viewed the pomp and pageantry of the first real coronation that the Sandwich Islanders have ever beheld. The mere description of this

bit of royal theatricals is enough to provoke a smile on the face of any sensible person. To a sober Republican these ceremonies seem like an elaborate travesty of Royalty." And so they are; and we all agree that, should we eventually cast anchor in the bay of Kututu, we will use our influence, with a view to win, from the Republican critic of kings, a favourable notice of our newly-discovered monarch. Mr. Jeffrey Waller, as a practical commentary upon our remarks, produces from his mysterious cabinet a crown and sceptre; "for," said he, "it seems to me that these things are the proper symbols of kingly Majesty; but, if you think they are likely to offend the gentleman in New York, we will not produce them at the Kututuan court." We all agree, however, that they are so simple, and in such good taste, that they should not be excluded from the gifts the merchant had provided for my Irish king, and which included a handsome Winchester rifle and other valuable examples of modern invention.

As we chat over the future, we are under the dreamy influences of the present, the calm, blue sea and sky, and the soft breeze that seems to come in at the open ports, though it is chiefly the result of the punkah, with its origin of motion at the engine that propels the vessel. And now the land which looked at first like clouds, and then like undulating hills with palm-leaves marked out against the sky, appears to approach us. We are at the entrance of a lovely harbour, and it seems as if the vast palm-clad mountains are coming out to meet us—so quietly is *The Pioneer* approaching them. All at once we are motionless. Then we are at anchor. We all go on deck. The number of our crew is a surprise to us as they muster; and to see our two raking guns in position, fore and aft, we might be a gunboat of Her Majesty's Fleet, or a pirate in disguise.

"Captain thinks there is a pirate village up the creek yonder," says Waller in an aside to me. "But I have seen more of the corsairs of these seas than he has; and I believe we are off Kututu."

"Do you, indeed?" I exclaim, my heart beating wildly at the possible realisation of the success of our holiday expedition.

I sweep the coast with my glass. Not a soul is in sight. All is still as it is beautiful. The blue sea seems to whisper to the shore. Along the rising ground, and up among the hills, tower the silent palms, terrace upon terrace. Not a leaf moves.

"It is like the Boulonagan coast," I say, "and there are no breakers."

My wife glances at me a little anxiously from beneath her broad white hat. Mrs. Ernstone is leaning upon her husband's arm, looking towards the point where a rivulet comes streaming out of the hills and down to the shore, a thread of silver upon the golden beach. A little further away in that direction we can see a break in the vast amphitheatre of hills.

"And there lies the village, no doubt," says the Captain to Mr. Waller, directing his glass upon the point, "they must have seen

us long ago, and that is why I think they are what I told you."

"What do you say to giving them a salute?" says Waller.

"By all means," answers the captain, and almost the next moment *The Pioneer's* thunder awakens the echoes of the unknown land.

It is an impressive moment, and there is not wanting a touch of peril in it; for the pirates of all these seas have made gallant fights even with English gunboats. Helen lays her hand in mine, and I note that it trembles.

"You are not alarmed?" I ask.

"No, but awed; there is something so marvellous to me in that iron voice of conscious power summoning the Unknown as it were," she says.

As she speaks, the deck vibrates under the shock of a second salute. The sound travels far away; but not a leaf nor tree stirs along the shore. A white cloud sails up above the rigging, and hangs there like a

flag. There is no response, except the repetition of the boom from hill to hill.

"Launch the pinnace!" says the captain, with an expression of impatience in his voice, and at that moment there shoots out from the creek a solitary canoe. The pinnace is launched and manned, all the same, with a well-armed crew. For a moment the canoe pauses as *The Pioneer*'s boat pushes off; but it comes on again fearlessly. Covering it with our glasses, we see that it is a single canoe. The rower comes pounding along, digging his paddle into the water at a tremendous rate, and shooting through the sea at remarkable speed. Presently it and the pinnace both cease rowing, as if by mutual consent. A palaver ensues. The pinnace is signalled to return with the canoe. The long-boat swings round and heads for the ship. The canoe follows humbly in its wake. As the native grows under my glass, I think I recognise him. When last I saw him, I believe he wore a turban decorated with a pearl set in dull silver. A sash was wound

round his loins, and he beat a drum in the King's procession. Now he only wears a sarong; but I notice his armlet of stones and shells, and the grotesque bird tattooed upon his chest.

"Yes!" I exclaim, turning round triumphantly to my friends; "I recognise the native—this indeed is Kututu!"

The native leaps from his frail boat, catches hold of the rope we fling to him, and swings himself on deck. He has recognised me on the instant. Posing himself in a picturesque attitude of submission one moment, he stands before me erect the next.

"Welkumo, say Maka baginda white Durando come, come!" it seemed to me were the words he uttered.

I gather that he means the King welcomes me, and bids me come to him. The language was neither Malay nor any *patois* akin to Malay that I had ever heard, though I detect the Mayalese now and then in a curious jumble with a few English words,

such as "welcome," "good," "much," "peace," and a general invitation to partake of betel. With all this there is a feverish anxiety to induce me to leave the ship at once.

A council of war is held, and it is decided that I shall go on board the pinnace, reconnoitre the situation, and report thereon. Helen is loath to let me go, and my mother is greatly concerned, but I am so well assured of my safety, have so formidable an escort, and so excellent an example of confidence in the King's messenger, that presently I am sitting in the stern of the pinnace, making for the shore.

We have hardly landed when I can see that something serious has happened. A party of the King's chiefs meet us. Frst laying down their arms, in token of submission, they take them up, carrying them reversed, and, chanting a dirge-like song, they fall into procession, leaving us to follow them. They lead us to a lonely grove, and halt at a barbaric kind of temple, partly built

of bamboo and palm-leaves, open on all sides and unroofed. In the centre, resting upon a rough bench, is a coffin formed out of the trunk of a tree. Moving slowly round and round the catafalque were a troop of men and women who utter plaintive sounds; while at its head sat motionless a native of much dignity of pose and figure.

"Maka baginda, the King is dead," said a comely-looking youth of eighteen summers, stepping from out the shadow of the adjacent jungle, "he say you come, make us know his will."

The speaker was a lithe, supple-limbed youth, far lighter in colour than any of the other natives. He wore a chain of gold and unpolished stones, and a loose robe fell gracefully from his shoulders, over an embroidered sarong. In a light sash round his waist he carried a revolver and a knife, and his black hair was held from his forehead by a fillet or band of a curious yarn.

I bowed to the young native, and stepped

reverently towards the coffin. Surely there lay my friend, dressed as last I saw him, with his whistle, his pipes, and his rifle lying by his side, and upon his breast a cumbersome-looking packet, addressed in Roman letters, that had been formed with difficulty, TO MY GOOD FRIEND H. DURAND.

The chiefs and people gathered around me as I opened it, and read the King's message.

"The white god good, true; the King say you come over the great seas; you are here," said the young chief, slowly, as a man speaking in a foreign tongue, who chooses his words.

I read as follows, every word written in Roman capitals:—

"The wound they gave me never healed.
"I did not tell you of this my son, for he
"was one of the surprises I had for you.
"But never intended him for my place.
"Meant send him to England. But now it
"is best he shall be King. His wish is so.
"He is brave, has man's heart. I believe
"you will come. You know what I wish.

"Farewell. Pray for the poor misguided
"soul of Shamous O'Brien.

"KUTUTU REX."

When I had mastered the contents of this last will and testament of the first King of Kututu, I conversed, in Malay, with an elderly chief, and found that the people were willing, and indeed anxious, that the youth who had addressed me in English should reign over them, "for," said the chief, "it was his father's wish, and also that he can speak to the white god in His own tongue, and can address the gods of Kututu and Bulonagan likewise in theirs; beyond which, he possesses the secret of the fiery thunder."

Thereupon I read to him the will of my poor dead friend, and begged him to proclaim in Kututuan, that I would attend, with a company of the great white queen's people, to do honour to their new monarch, at such times as they should appoint. At this the natives gave a loud shout of joy, and the young chief bowed his head before me; but no sooner had they done so than they re-

turned to their offices of mourning. I learnt that at sundown the body of the king would be conveyed to a mausoleum, which he himself had had constructed in a rocky cavern near the coast; and that on the morrow they would formally seat the new King upon the throne where his father had sat, and pledge him their allegiance.

And so, signalling my attendants, who had halted at a short distance, I retraced my steps to the coast, and the pinnace pushed off for *The Pioneer*. I felt much saddened at my friend's death, all the more so that his fatal wound had been received during that Bulonagan revolt of which I had been the innocent cause. The old chief told me that the Bulonagans had, ever since, paid an increased tribute, and that the instigators of the rebellion had been executed. I confess that, with the memory of the dead Irishman's calm genial face in my thoughts, I felt blood-thirsty enough, at the moment, to be glad that the ungrateful rebels had been severely punished.

When in our illuminated saloon at night I had related what had transpired, Mr. Waller seemed to think the King had really had some spiritual forecast of my coming. He argued that without such encouragement he could never have so prepared himself for my visit.

"And this, you see," he remarked, "was the opinion of the natives themselves, and depend upon it there is truth in the very simplicity of the savages' untaught faith in spiritual manifestations."

It appeared to comfort the good old man to think that he had come upon, what he conceived to be, another natural proof of the active influence of unseen agents upon the general affairs of men.

My wife and mother could not sufficiently wonder, not only at the confirmation of my discovery of a new world in the tropical sea, but at my timely arrival in the interest of the Irish succession.

Early the next morning quite a fleet of canoes surrounded *The Pioneer*, several of

them loaded with fruits, flowers, fish, and birds. Durian, oranges, mangosteen, figs, fowls, and the strangest looking fish, were heaped upon the deck, as the contents of boat after boat were hauled up. Some of the fish were perfectly blue, others a brilliant red, as if they had caught the glow of a cluster of orchids which were lying among the fruits. It was a gorgeous picture of colour. A few of the chiefs came on board. We gave them knives, necklaces, pipes, and tobacco. Beckoning several of the women who hung back, Mr. Waller brought out some of those imitation gems which he had shown me years before at Sulu.

"There," he said to me with a quiet smile, "now you know what they are for."

He gave the women handsfull of necklets, armlets, and rings, that set their black eyes dancing with delight and reflecting the flashes of the dazzling gewgaws themselves.

Then, at a signal from the shore, the old chief who spoke Malay informed us that the Kututuan people were now awaiting our pre-

sence, since he understood it was our desire to do honour to their king. He explained to me that the ceremony of installation had commenced with the rising of the sun, and that the young monarch awaited our visit, after which he desired to visit his father's friends on board the great fire-canoe.

Two boats carried us to the shore. The same clear blue sky as that of yesterday canopied the entire vault of heaven. Just as motionless stood the giant palms. The late king had made a roadway through the half-cleared jungle to the principal village. We found awaiting us a couple of roughly-built carriages drawn by buffaloes. Attended on foot by our armed guard, we stepped into these primitive conveyances, the first that had ever been seen in the island, and were escorted to a wide space in front of the royal palace. Here the young king himself came forth to meet us. Then, pointing to seats by his side, which we at once occupied, he sat upon his father's chair. Betel nut fruits, and a native liquor were handed

round. After we had all partaken of the refreshment the King spoke to us in English, expressing his deep gratitude at the honour we had done him, and hoping, when the time should be considered ripe, that there would be trade and alliance between the great white queen and Kututu. Thereupon Mr. Jeffrey Waller handing the plain gold crown and sceptre to my wife, Helen, with the grace and majesty of a queen, herself stepped forward, and, placing the tiara upon the young monarch's head, handed to him the sceptre, which she told him was not a weapon, but only the symbol of power and authority, such as the great white queen carried on State occasions. A vast crowd stood round about, calm spectators of the scene, and when the young king stood up in his crown, and with the glittering sceptre in his hand, they gave three wild shouts, flinging their arms aloft and brandishing their spears to such an extent, as to greatly alarm Mrs. Ernstone, She clung to her husband in a manner that did not escape

His Majesty, who smiled at me and said, "This great chief's wife braver, more beautiful, but not more good than that," indicating a comparison between Helen and my mother, as well he might; for my wife was standing erect yet pliant, graceful as a willow wand, her dress a white clinging robe, a huge fan in her hand, her head protected from the sun by a white straw hat, shaped something like what I believe ladies call "the granny bonnet." She was a picture of feminine strength and beauty. "And I only wonder," said Mr. Jeffrey Waller when we were once more fairly on board *The Pioneer*, "that the young king did not ask you to give her to him for his queen."

"Which of course Horace would have done at once," said Ernstone.

"And one day, when you did not mix his liquor properly, he would have beaten you with his new sceptre," said my mother, at which comical view of the situation everybody laughed heartily.

The king invited us to a feast and

games for the next day; but the captain, whom we took into our confidence, said, "All's well that ends well! There were two thousand savages around that wooden palace to-day, and we shall have the northern monsoon against us if we are not lucky enough to steer successfully into our course for Manilla within forty-eight hours."

Therefore, when the night had come, we gazed our last upon the watch-fires of Kututu. The boatswain's whistle gave the cheerful cue for weighing anchor. The stars came out like great diamonds, which looked still brighter mirrored in the quiet sea. Presently the radiant world above us began, as it were, to move. The "milder suns" that "love a shade to cast, and in the bright wave fling the trembling mast," marched along in a gorgeous procession. The poor little lights on the coast gradually faded out, and we were once more at sea. Long into the night we sat upon the white deck, Helen and I, too much impressed, with the wondrous calm, to speak. I think we offered up silent

prayers of humble submission to the Divine ruler of the great world and its multitudinous seas. Steaming between the star-lit heaven above us and the star-lit sea below, it seemed as if we were floating in space, so calm, so gentle was the night. Then the knowledge that we were far away from familiar waters stimulated the imagination, and sent it on strange mysterious journeys. Presently my wife, in a whisper, as if fearing to disturb the universal stillness, said, "Do you believe those stars are peopled with beings having holier aims and sublimer missions than are allotted to the inhabitants of this lower world of ours?"

"I only know," I said, taking her gently into my arms, "that this present world, with you, is enough for my dearest hopes, let yonder radiant spheres be what they may."

And so the ship sailed on, freighted with loving hearts.

THE END.

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